

# Wild 132

30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

AN EXERCISE IN EXERCISE ON

THE TETON CREST TRAIL

WALKING GRADUALLY

PENGUIN: A MONTH

ONE DAY SERIES, SANS CRICKET

FLUKE: BACKSTEN TRACK

GREEN GULLY TRACK NOTES

PROFILE: DAVID COOK

TWO TASTY GEAR REVIEWS

WINNER'S GUIDE TO THE

EUROPEAN ALPS

## Mystical *Mutawintji*



AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



## Departments

### 4 From the Editor

Getting the right water balance

### 6 Wildfire

Bush rescue, replicated walking routes, and responses to the sleeping bag survey

### 9 Wild Shot

Concentrated Crustacean

### 10 Info

World rogaining champs, youngest traverse of the GHT, and Wild Writers

### 12 Wild Diary

Summer is on its way

### 14 All Things Great and Small

The Botany Bay Weevil

### 16 Green Pages

A call for World Heritage listing for Cape York, national park development, and the first of a series of articles from Bob Brown

### 20 Wildlife

Quentin Chester muses on the benefits of human herd behaviour

### 22 Profile

Sylvia Varnham O'Regan talks to seven-summiteer David Cole

### 38 Folio

Grant Dixon captures the brilliance of Bachsten Creek

### 52 The Nature of the Beast

There's more to the audacious scrub turkey than its relentless scratching, writes Steve Van Dyck

### 54 Track Notes

Dave Cauldwell shows us around the Green Gully circuit in northern NSW

### 58 Gear Survey

We sink our teeth into 13 dishes designed for the outdoors

### 63 Gear Survey

Wild surveys three dehydrating units you can use at home

### 68 Equipment

Ooh, new gear

### 70 Reviews

A special review section on walking guidebooks, field guides, and more

### 74 Portrait

Peter Cochrane

## Features

### 24 Murmurs Across Millenia

Suzan Muir shares a physical and spiritual journey in Mutawintji National Park

### 30 Identity Crisis on the Teton Crest Trail

Elsbeth Callender discovers herself – and a few surprises – in northwest Wyoming

### 34 From Rocks to Roads... and Everything in Between

Warren Thomas stumbles across a variety of surfaces during a south-north attempt of the Penguin Cradle Trail

### 42 One Day Series

With the arrival of his first child, Hugh de Kretser conducts some forced research on the benefits of day walking

### 46 A Beginner's Guide to the European Alps

If you fancy a trip to Europe, Glenn van der Knijff has the information to get you on your way

### 51 Pesto

Andrew Davison takes this simple Italian paste and gives it an outdoor flavour

## Wild

AUTISMUS MUSEUMS KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

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### WARNING

The activities covered  
in this magazine are  
dangerous. Undertaking  
them without proper training,  
experience, skill, regard to  
safety, and equipment could  
result in serious injury or death.



Cover Suzan Muir  
looking out over  
Mutawintji National Park.  
Mariki Prozesky

Contents A hunter waits  
patiently in a creek in  
the Kimberley.  
Rob Kettels

**The brain is a densely packed bundle of tens of billions of nerve cells and if they swell...can cause a whole raft of potentially fatal problems.**



## Getting the right water balance

**L**ike a goldfish's three-second memory, the myth of 'drink eight glasses of water a day' is widely believed, but almost always untrue. Years ago I read an article that recommended runners always have the feeling of needing to urinate so they know they're not dehydrated. Wrong! Apart from being extremely uncomfortable, research now shows that people should only replace the water they lose, which, for most of us, is four to six glasses a day. That's including water in food we eat.

But what if you drink too much? And how much is too much?

The death of 30-year-old bushwalker Jonathan Dent in April this year highlighted the dangers of excessive water consumption. Mr Dent set off for a four-hour one-way walk in Tasmania's Dial Ranges (adjacent to Warren Thomas's Penguin-Cradle Trail attempt in this issue, page 34). He was well prepared and had organised his wife to collect him from the other end of the walk. He had no pre-existing illnesses, was experienced navigating, and had been bushwalking recently.

During the walk, he rang his wife on a number of occasions sounding increasingly confused. After he failed to show up at the meeting point, his wife alerted search and rescue that evening and Mr Dent's body was found on a nearby track the following day. Initially, the post mortem was unable to determine cause of death, so coroner Michael Brett consulted a medical expert who reported that the evidence indicated exercise-associated hyponatraemia (EAH).

Hyponatraemia (hypo = low; natraemia = sodium in blood) is the dilution of your body's sodium through, for example, congestive cardiac failure or drinking huge amounts of water. Exercise-associated hyponatraemia occurs during or up to 24 hours after prolonged activity and can lead to water intoxication, which isn't as fun as it sounds.

It's no surprise that it's pretty common in marathon runners, yet is something race organisers can, to a degree, control: drink stops were only 1.6 kilometres apart in the 2002 Boston marathon and 13 per cent of finishers experienced EAH, compared to none in the Christchurch marathon that same year, where drink stops were five kilometres apart.

The other big factor of EAH is reduced water excretion. Normally, a healthy kidney can filter about a litre of urine an hour. But when your body is placed under stress – say, running a marathon – a hormone called vasopressin is secreted which conserves water, and kidney volume can decrease to only 100mL per hour. Combine this with increased fluid consumption and it's not hard to see how sodium imbalance occurs.

With so much water in your blood serum, body cells such as muscle cells and neurons contain comparatively much higher concentrations of salts. This means water flows into them, making them fatter. For some cells, such as those that make up muscle fibers, there is room to expand. However, for some – like neurons – there simply isn't any space. The brain is a densely packed bundle of tens of billions of nerve cells and if they swell, they press on the skull and each other and can cause a whole raft of potentially fatal problems.

The part of your brain that's responsible for controlling your breathing and heart – the medulla oblongata – resides in the little piece of brain tissue that makes its way into the first couple of vertebrae and becomes your spinal column. Swelling of these cells can cause symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, headaches, confusion, irritability and seizures. At worst, the pressure can be enough to stop your heart and respiration. (The same principle relates to hanging. The little piece of bone on the second vertebra that allows your skull to swivel when you shake your head,

snaps forward and destroys the medulla.)

I've been dehydrated and had EAH while trail running and both times, experienced similar symptoms – I felt a bit doozy, lethargic, and very cranky. I thought I was dehydrated when I suffered EAH and assumed I needed more water. It was only after my running partner saw me guzzling my sixth bottle in an hour that he gently wrestled it away and sat down with me.

Hyponatraemia isn't limited to prolonged exercise. Australian teenager Anna Wood died in 1995 after drinking too much water as a result of taking ecstasy. A 2007 competition in California – 'Hold Your Wee for a Wii' – resulted in one contestant dying of water intoxication. A condition called psychogenic polydipsia, which is associated with medications that give patients dry mouths, can also lead to excessive water consumption.

EAH while walking, though, is a rare phenomenon. Although Mr Dent had walked before, his wife said he was 'not as fit as he would have liked to be'. One of the concerns Mr Brett highlighted in his report was that Mr Dent was alone. While it is nice to go out for some 'me' time, the coroner said that 'it is possible...that had he been in company, and...had assistance in finding his way to his destination, that he may have survived. At the very least, his chances of survival would have been significantly enhanced'.

Although death from hyponatraemia is uncommon (even in extreme cases, mortality rates vary from 8 per cent to 86 per cent) and most often a complication of other medical illnesses, it's good to listen to your body. Drink when you're thirsty. This is a bit of a morbid editorial, but with the heat of summer around the corner it's easy to forget your best hydration indicator is you.

Belinda Smith  
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# Wild

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Issue 131, Sep-Oct 2012

## A REMINDER THAT NO ONE IS IMMUNE

As a young wilderness activist, a bush rescue would have shamed my self-reliance and felt like a betrayal of the very areas whose remoteness I advocated.

Facing a recent accident in remote country has shifted my perspective. We should all know first aid, but it can only prepare us so far. It was hard to assess the seriousness of the accident. Would my friend recover sufficiently to walk out, and what were the risks of delaying medical attention, were testing questions in the circumstances.

I reluctantly bought a beacon two years ago, and the decision to activate it was difficult, but was affirmed by the air ambulance crew and medical examination. Helicopter rescue is a privilege, not a right. Rescuers routinely face risks; the team that helped us so magnificently in difficult conditions had tragically lost a member last year.

This privilege carries responsibilities. GPS beacons pinpoint locations and curtail lengthy, dangerous searches. Most importantly, all of us must ensure we are adequately prepared for our bush adventures. Emergencies can happen to the best prepared of us, in the bush as at home, and in these situations it is reasonable to call for help.

Jonathan Miller  
Curtin, ACT

## SLEEPING BAGS

Nice review of expensive sleeping bags in *Wild* no 131. A pity you didn't look at cheaper bags. I bought one for less than \$100 on special, yet it's by far the best down bag I've slept in. I've used it in Victorian Alps conditions, down to -5°C.

Maybe you should think about looking at less expensive bags for the next review – people don't have to spend nearly \$1000 on a sleeping bag.

Mick Webster  
Chiltern, VIC

I enjoyed *Wild* no 131 – the profile on Simon Yates was a great read. After seeing *Touching the Void* many times, it was a great, recent insight into 'the man who cut the rope'.

What was really handy was the sleeping bag survey. I'm in the market for a decent sleeping bag for a winter trip to Europe. I'll be making after Christmas. Your survey more or less helped me make up my mind after weeks of dithering, and I went out and bought a Talus from Sea to Summit. Thanks!

Richard Soderling  
Geelong, VIC

## CORRECTION: GUNS AND AMMO ON KOKODA

It was excellent reading Simon Southern's article covering all sorts of aspects of the Kokoda Track (*Wild* no 130) – showing it to be something more than just a path.

Regarding the 25-pound guns that were hauled up the ranges, I thought it worth pointing out that the figure refers to the weight of the ammunition used. The guns themselves weighed over a ton apiece (!) making the endurance of these men even more remarkable.

Jonathon Doust  
Woodvale, WA

## A LIFE OF WALKING, THROUGH OTHERS' EYES

I have just picked up *Wild* no 131 from our newsgast and I find it to be a wonderful souvenir of all my walking in Australia. It all started back in 1938 when my family moved to a new farm property and there was a picturesque range of hills on the northern horizon. At eight years of age, I took off on my first solo overnight walk!

But by a remarkable coincidence, my walking ever since has included every one of the routes and/or sites described in this issue. Better still, all of them are beautifully described and characterised in a way which shows that the authors experienced very much the same appreciation which I recall with a great sense of my own feelings for each area.

Another coincidence is that the photograph of the Gran Vilayan road on page 25 has a horse just where I saw one

back in the 1970s. Similarly, I recall the beauty of the river in Valle Belén.

So I send my sincere admiration and thanks for the quality of your editing and your great authors.

Elery Hamilton-Smith  
Carlton South, VIC



## BUSHWALKING TIP

Always leave two plastic shopping bags somewhere in your pack. When you get to camp pull off your wet socks. Now slip on your dry socks and put your feet into the plastic bags, then slip your feet (in the bags) into the wet shoes. Your socks will stay dry due to the plastic bags and your shoes will dry, and you have something on your feet for protection around the camp fire. Then go and hang up your wet socks near the fire (not too close) to dry. In the morning you will have a pair of dry shoes and two pairs of dry socks!

Jason Lorch  
Earlwood, NSW



For his tip, Jason wins a Deuter Exosphere sleeping bag, worth \$289.00. The Exosphere is filled with Thermo ProLoft to keep you warm and has water-repellent areas at the head, sides and feet to keep you dry. Elastic chamber seams allow up to 25 per cent stretch, giving you a comfortable sleep.

Reader's letters and tips are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of fewer than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, Vic 3025 or email [bellinda.smith@pmcreative.com.au](mailto:bellinda.smith@pmcreative.com.au)

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The Top End wet season is spectacular and, more importantly, enjoyable. This is, in many ways, my favourite time of year. This trip is a combination of some of the short wet season walks that I most enjoy doing myself.

I enjoy them all so much that I'll run the trip for as few as two people at no extra charge. I've designed it to allow participants plenty of time to acclimatise as we work our way from day walks up to longer overnights.

If you have ever wondered what our wet season is really like, you owe it to yourself to have a look at our trip notes.

*Russell Willis*



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# Concentrated Crustacean



**Photographer Bethany Beattie writes:** *The photo was taken on Oak Beach, south of Port Douglas with a Nikon Coolpix P6000. This crab was little more than 1-2 millimetres in size. I picked up an interesting piece of driftwood and there he was. I was lucky to see him, let alone get a focussed image.*

Port Douglas, QLD



By submitting a *Wild Shot* you can win a fantastic camera bag and accessory pack from Lowepro worth \$489. For tips and tricks, check out [wild.com.au/reviews/item/lowepro](http://wild.com.au/reviews/item/lowepro).

To be eligible for the prize, send your image to [belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au](mailto:belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au).

We are after any outdoor shots that are humorous, inspiring, spectacular, or all three.



# Aussies clean up at World Rogaining Champs



David Baldwin and Julie Quinn (centre pair) receive gold in the WRC XV class. Photo: Tamsin Barnes

AUSTRALIAN TEAMS brought home two gold, two silver, and two bronze medals from the 10th World Rogaining Championships in the Czech Republic in August and September.

While the Estonian team of Rain Ensaaar and Silver Ensaaar ranked first overall, Australian teammates David Baldwin and Julie Quinn nabbed the title of the 'Best Metal Miners in the Ore Mountains' as they scooped gold in Mixed Veterans and silver in Mixed Open classes – the highest rank of only two teams with podium finishes in more than one class.

'We didn't expect to do that well, as the course had lots of trails, and that meant lots of running,'

Julie, who is also president of the ACT Rogaining Association, told Wild. 'David and I are more suited to hard navigation.'

'I was sitting down, having some lunch about 45 minutes after the race finished, when another competitor from the ACT saw that the preliminary results were in. When we found out we'd done so well there was a bit of celebrating. Lots of jumping around.'

Rod Gray and Geoff Lawson took out gold in the Men's Super Veteran class, while Jess Baker and Gill Fowler scored silver in Women's Open.

Bronze medals were awarded to Tamsin Barnes and Thorlene Egerton (Women's Veteran) and

Derek Morris and Ted van Geldermalsen (Men's Super Veteran).

Overall, Australia finished fourth on the medal tally behind Russia, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic.

More than 330 teams descended on the small town of Přebuz on the Czech/German border for a 24-hour race in the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) from 31 August to 1 September. Competitors encountered electric fences, stinging nettles, bogs, and the odd roe deer while hunting down 69 checkpoints. Altitude ranged from 550 to 1018 metres above sea level.



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# Australian teenager walks the Great Himalaya Trail

Melbourne's Peter McVeigh recently completed a traverse of the 1700-kilometre, six-month Great Himalaya Trail and, at 19 years of age, became the youngest person to do so. Just turned 20 and back in Melbourne, Peter had a chat to *Wild* about his epic trip.

**WILD magazine:** When high school students finish Year 12 they usually go on a Schoolies binge. What was your reason behind such a big – and different – trip?

**Peter McVeigh:** I graduated in 2010 and I wasn't going to rush into uni so I worked through 2011 knowing I was going to travel. I'd been to Nepal before and knew I wanted to go back – it was just a matter of which part. One day I said to my grandma, 'I'm thinking about doing a trip – maybe one of these Himalaya stages', and she said, 'Why not do the whole lot?' I thought, 'You know what – she's right.' I worked four jobs for a year to save up.

**WM:** Four jobs?

**PM:** Yep. During the day, I'd work at the school coaching kids' sports. I worked in a pizza shop during evenings, and did some gardening one day a week – which I really liked because it was outside – and finally, some private coaching too. I had soccer training three times a week. Normally I'd get home from the pizza shop at 11.30 at night. Saturday night was my only free night. Plus I was juggling a girlfriend at the same time, so there was plenty happening.

**WM:** On one of the seven stages it was just you and the guide. How did you cope with the isolation?

**PM:** There were times when it was difficult, definitely. We would wade through waist-deep snow for 13 days straight in -22°C. I got frost nip on four of my toes. Sometimes it got emotionally difficult too, but then I knew that I could just keep going. That determination kept me going. A few times I thought I could just take the easy option and jump on one of the



helicopters that were coming in and out all the time but I didn't have 5000 pounds to pay for it, so I had to keep going. I got altitude sickness and didn't eat for five days straight, so I had to rely on my mental focus to get me through it. However, I was really loving it. It sounds weird – how could someone be enjoying themselves when it sounds like hell? – but I'd look around and get this sense of absolute silence and tranquillity out there on the mountains. One thing I remember most is the breathing up there

– you'd take a deep breath and feel alive.

**WM:** How did you feel when you got to the Tibetan border after 150 days of ice walls, deep snowdrifts, and high-altitude scenery?

**PM:** I had mixed emotions because we got to the west border, the border with Tibet, and went, 'Well, that's it. Now we have to backtrack five days to get back to the remote airstrip to then fly out'. Then again that was exciting for me too, because I got to see it from a different view.

**WM:** How did you prepare yourself, mentally and physically, for the walk?

**PM:** I did some casual meditation classes for a few months before I went to get myself in a good headspace and clear my mind. I found that helped a lot, especially out in the mountains. I'd do it for a couple of minutes a day and move on. My best mate Kristian – we've been best friends since Prep – helped me do a lot of the training for the trip, and he said, 'Look mate, I'm going to miss you terribly but it'll be worth it, because we'll have the next 80 years ahead of us.' That's assuming we both live to 100. [Laughs]

**WM:** Do you think your youthfulness helped you make the distance?

**PM:** I think so. I'd love to try to get more young people to do this kind of thing for that reason, as well as get over the mindset that you can't do something. I believe you've got to find what you like to do and it makes everything so much easier. I also went in without any expectations. When I got the itinerary I didn't even look at it. All I knew was it was a big trip – I'd be walking from the east border to the west border – and I'm just going to take each day as it comes. That's the best attitude I think you can bring outdoors.



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# Wild Writers

"Engaging in the outdoors is as much about the mind as the body. It unlocks one's awareness to a world of hope and inspiration. Writing about it helps one's imagination to expand and increases the appreciation of the value of wilderness." Tim Macartney-Snape



WILD MAGAZINE, together with Sea to Summit and Outdoor Education Australia, is launching an exciting new competition for students from Grade 5 to Year 12: the First Annual Wild Writers Competition.

The competition encourages children to develop their writing skills while appreciating the outdoors. The topic is **My Wilderness Experience**. Entries open close Friday 29 March 2013. This allows teachers to plan activities

over summer and a term for students to work on their pieces, which can be in any written form fewer than 750 words.

Wild requests that teachers enter selected works to Wild Writers. Sea to Summit will supply prizes to first, second and third placegetters in the following age groups: Grades 5 and 6; Years 7 and 8; Years 9 and 10; and Years 11 and 12. The judging panel comprises writers and adventurers. Winners and some finalists will

also be published in Wild magazine and on the website. Category winners will receive a fantastic Traverse XT1 sleeping bag worth \$599.95, second placegetters will win a Black Diamond daypack worth \$129.95, and third placegetters take home an X-Series three-piece set worth \$59.95. All prizes are generously supplied by Sea to Summit.

For guidelines and announcements, please see [wild.com.au/wildwriters](http://wild.com.au/wildwriters)

## November

3/12hr Upside Down Bush  
Rogaine R  
2 Nov, QLD  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

iAdventure South East  
Queensland Adventure Race  
M  
3 Nov, QLD  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

Carcroo Cup Running Festival  
BR  
3-4 Nov, NSW  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Stromlo Forest Park 2/5km  
BR  
4 Dec, ACT  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Anaconda Adventure Race M  
4 Nov, WA  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

DuO Adventure #1 M  
4 Nov, NSW  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

King Island Ultra BR  
4 Nov, TAS  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Sri Chinmoy Triple Triathlon M  
4 Nov, ACT  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

Kathmandu Adventure Series  
M  
10 Nov, VIC  
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11 Nov, ACT  
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Great North Walk 100 mile  
and 100km BR  
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Marysville Marathon Festival  
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[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Socialgaine 6hr R  
11 Nov, NSW  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

Run from the Hills BR  
17 Nov, VIC  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Valley Stampede BR  
17 Nov, NSW  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

2 & 4hr rogaine/cyclogaine R  
18 Nov, TAS  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

Bare Creek Trail Run BR  
18 Nov, NSW  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Novelty event R  
24 Nov, WA  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

Razorback Run BR  
24 Nov, VIC  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

2x6hr bush Rogaine R  
24-25 Nov, VIC  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

Mark Webber Tasmania  
Challenge M  
28 Nov - 2 Dec, TAS  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

## December

Mud Run BR  
1 Dec, NSW  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Bruny Island Ultra BR  
2 Dec, TAS  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

DuO Adventure #2 M  
2 Dec, NSW  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

Canoe Sprint Grand Prix 1 &  
AYOF Team Selection C  
7-9 Dec, SA  
[canoe.org.au](http://canoe.org.au)

GP1 and AYOF Selection C  
7-9 Dec, NSW  
[canoe.org.au](http://canoe.org.au)

Anaconda Adventure Race  
Lorne M  
9 Dec, VIC  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

Murray Quadrathlon C  
15 Dec, VIC  
[canoe.org.au](http://canoe.org.au)

X-Marathon BR  
15 Dec, VIC  
[adventureace.com.au](http://adventureace.com.au)

Six Inch Trail BR  
16 Dec, WA  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

Tour de Ridges Half, 15km  
and 10km BR  
16 Dec, ACT  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

VicSuper Murray Marathon C  
27 Dec, VIC  
[canoe.org.au](http://canoe.org.au)

### Activities:

BR bush running, P paddling, R rogaine, M multisports, O orienteering, C canoeing

Rogaine events are organised by the State rogaine associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated

Wild Diary listings provide information about wilderness events. Send items for publication to [belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au](mailto:belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au)





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# The Botany Bay Weevil *Chrysolopus spectabilis*

Imagine you are Joseph Banks. You have stepped off HMS *Endeavour* and have laid eyes on a land that existed only in your imagination while on a rocking boat across the open ocean. You look up into a yellow flowered branch (later you will identify this tree as a golden wattle), and catch a glimpse of what looks like sparkling diamonds.

Ah! It's gone!

But careful inspection of the leaves reveals a beautiful beetle; black with blueish, greenish iridescent patches, 'reminiscent of the diamond beetle from Brazil,' you think. You pluck it from the branch and drop it into your vial of alcohol and catalogue it as 'probably poisonous' given those vibrant colours.

The Botany Bay weevil is famous in entomological and natural history circles for being one of the insects first described by Joseph Banks from James Cook's 1770 voyage to Australia. This type of scene has been played in many a natural historian's head as they imagine themselves the first person to lay eyes on a beautiful insect species. But frustratingly little is actually known about the first collection, including the exact location and date, despite the fact the type specimen that Banks collected is still in pretty good condition and is lying in darkness as part of the Banks Collection at the Natural History Museum in London, should you want to see it. We know it was collected some time between April and August 1770, but Botany Bay might have been a bit too hostile an environment to see these weevils out and about at that time of year. Banks could have collected the adult anywhere on the east coast.

The weevil's common name 'the Botany Bay weevil' is most likely derived from sightings in the Botany Bay area commonly made after the first settlement of Sydney in 1788. However, already well known in Europe at the time was the diamond beetle, a weevil from Brazil with similar colouration and markings as this new Australian one. Hence, the Australian counterpart is also known as the Botany Bay diamond weevil, the diamond beetle, sapphire weevil, and no doubt many other local names along its distribution in the southeast of Australia.

The species is in the family Curculionidae



Photographer Andrew Cuthbert says: *We were on our way down from the summit of Mt Norman in Girraween NP in southeast Queensland. It had been a beautiful blue January day with 360° views from the top. As we past a jumble of large boulders, my wife noticed something in a low shrub glinting in the sunlight. On closer inspection we found a beautiful green and black weevil. An Internet search when I got home identified it as Chrysolopus spectabilis – the Botany Bay weevil.*

(weevils) that combined with all other beetle species (Coleoptera), are the most diverse group of terrestrial arthropods on earth. The weevils, however, are distinct because of their strange snout-like rostrum that looks much like a nose. You'll see them everywhere you look now you've got your eye in.

You'll see the Botany Bay weevil on acacias, as it is a specialist that feeds, lives and breeds on 28 species of Acacia in Australia, including the Cootamundra wattle, silver and golden wattles, and the Australian blackwood. The adults feed on sap inside tough stems that they access with their tough mouthparts and long rostrum. Mothers lay eggs directly into the stem of the trees just above the surface of the ground. They need to be near the soil because when the grubs hatch they bore deeper into the tree and down into the

roots where they stay and develop for 8-11 months, after which time they leave their pupae cases in the roots and bore their way out of the plant as an adult. As you can imagine, having many of these weevils in Acacia plantations can cause problems, and adult weevils have been accused of ring barking young trees, reducing water uptake and destroying new shoots.

Their vibrant colours make them a photographer's dream, and the fact that they are not poisonous means you can get up close and personal for a portrait of your bushwalking buddies.

Kirsti Abbott

To submit a photo for All Things Great and Small please contact [belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au](mailto:belinda.smith@primecreative.com.au). We will accept photos of plants or animals and pay at our standard rate. Published photos will be accompanied by some history that we will source.

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# The Call of the Whales

**Bob Brown writes on the effects of the proposed Woodside gas hub in one of our national biodiversity hotspots – Western Australia's Kimberley Coast**

As a great humpback whale lifted from the ocean, a mountainous living fountain, gasps and cries of amazement came from the small crowd of humans on the foredeck of the MV Steve Irwin. Her calf then lifted from the sea beside her in perfect mimicry and crash-splashed back into the emerald green waters.

Here off the Kimberley Coast, in Australia's national whale sanctuary, were two of our warm-blooded cousins doing what whales have done for thousands of years. This coast is the home of the world's largest humpback whale herd – more than 10 000 of them. It is the breeding and birthing place from which the humpbacks travel south for their annual summer visit to the even richer feeding seas off Antarctica. The Kimberley Coast is their home; Antarctica their place for annual migration.

But suddenly, neither the Kimberley sanctuary nor the Antarctic sanctuary is safe for the whales – or for those who uphold that sanctity.

The Japanese whaling fleet with its grenade-tipped harpoons illegally invades the Antarctic waters each Christmas, but it is Sea Shepherd's Captain Paul Watson who is on the run from an Interpol arrest warrant. Watson's crime was to put his ships like the Steve Irwin between the whalers and the whales.

In our own Kimberley whale sanctuary, Woodside Petroleum is pushing ahead with its plan to build the servicing port for the world's



*A humpback breaching off the Kimberley Coast.  
Photo: Bob Brown*

James Price Point from the Browse Basin 400 kilometres out at sea. The liquefied gas will be exported to Asia from the adjacent port. A 2.5-kilometre breakwater and a ditch dredged six kilometres long and 300 metres wide is required to accommodate supertankers – right through the whale nursery.

Around 34 million tonnes of dredged spoil will be dumped back into the ocean. Independent scientists worry that the next big cyclone will

to Woodside's existing factory site further south would save the company billions of dollars. Shell, which holds more than a quarter of the shares in the venture, is the world's leader in processing gas offshore at the well site and is thought to prefer that plan. But Perth and Canberra are insisting on the more expensive and most environmentally destructive option at James Price Point.

The ultimate arbiters will be 23 million Australians. Woodside's board and the Federal Government will make their decisions in the first half of 2013. How much the rest of us object in the meantime will determine the final outcome.

After seeing the humpbacks' leaps from the Kimberley seas we took to a Sea Shepherd inflatable and moved closer to the coast. Another humpback mother, her calf swimming beside her, came towards us, then turned and exhaled before letting out a long, melodious call.

I listened to that call and thought of the millions of tonnes of spoil which will await the same whales down below if they attempt to move around the planned obstructing breakwater and dodge the supertankers in the years ahead. For these magnificent whales there awaits a needless disaster which Australians can and must avoid.

For more information, please see the Bob Brown Foundation: [bobbrown.org.au](http://bobbrown.org.au)

## **A 2.5-kilometre breakwater and a ditch dredged six kilometres long and 300 metres wide is required to accommodate supertankers – right through the whale nursery.**

biggest gas factory across the world's biggest humpback whale nursery. Western Australia's Premier Colin Barnett is compulsorily acquiring Aboriginal land at James Price Point. The federal minister for energy, Martin Ferguson, requires that Woodside build at James Price Point or lose the rights to the gas. The federal environment minister, Tony Burke, pointedly excluded the area from his listing of the rest of the Western Kimberley as a national heritage area in 2012 but did list the dinosaur footprints on the shoreline.

Woodside's factory will process gas piped to

disperse the sludge along the coast, potentially smothering 300 square kilometres of sea grasses and corals which are also the feeding grounds for rare turtles, dolphins and dugongs. So to the aid of the Goolarabooloo Traditional Owners (other TOs support the gas factory), feisty Broome campaigners and the whales, the Steve Irwin went north from Melbourne in August to draw national and global attention to the threat.

This is no complicated campaign: the whale nursery cannot move but the gas factory can.

In fact, business analysts say that piping the gas





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# Cape York needs World Heritage protection

*The Aurukun wetlands, five times bigger than Kakadu's, are threatened by extensive bauxite mining proposals on Cape York.*  
Photo: Kerry Trapnell



GAVAN MCFADZEAN REPORTS: Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke has committed to nominate Cape York Peninsula for World Heritage listing in February 2013 with the consent of Traditional Owners.

The spectacular Cape York is well worthy of World Heritage status. It contains larger rainforests than the Daintree, more old growth forest than Tasmania, more river biodiversity than the Franklin, larger reef systems than Western Australia's Ningaloo, bigger wetlands than Kakadu and larger dune fields than Fraser Island.

Cape York is a unique interconnected mosaic of rainforests, savanna, free-flowing rivers, wetlands, dune fields, coast and coral reefs.

The Cape's Indigenous cultures and languages reflect the incredible diversity of this

environment, revealing a rich expression of human interactions with nature all the way back to ancient times.

Cape York has a staggering abundance of wildlife, including half of Australia's bird species and a third of our mammals. About 380 of Australia's rare and threatened species are found on the Cape, such as the northern quoll. At least 264 plant and 40 animal species occur only on Cape York, yet this tropical paradise is so remote and ecologically rich that many species remain undocumented. In the past year alone, five species were discovered, including a tiny freshwater crab and a freshwater shrimp.

But any Cape York World Heritage listing must be comprehensive enough to protect it from the mining industry. Already eight new bauxite, sand and coalmines are proposed and about a

quarter of the Cape is under exploration.

New mines will result in the obliteration of tens of thousands of hectares of wilderness, the opening of new mining roads and ports, the building of dams, pollution, dredging and increased shipping through the Great Barrier Reef.

Mining for bauxite and kaolin is one of the most destructive forms of mining as the deposits are found in shallow layers near the surface, meaning vegetation cover is completely removed.

With consent from traditional owners, a Cape York World Heritage listing would give indigenous and non-indigenous landholders a fantastic opportunity and the resources to protect and manage their land for the benefit of all Australians.

## Parks for sale

PHIL INGAMMELLS REPORTS: The Victorian government has invited private developers to apply for 99-year leases for tourism projects in the state's national parks. Among the justifications for this new policy, the government claims park visitors currently have to drive back to Melbourne to find somewhere to sleep, and that tourists are not spending enough money inside parks.

National parks have been proclaimed for many good reasons. They protect intact habitat types and thousands of species so that scientists can increase their understanding of how these incredibly complex systems work.

They allow us, and future generations, to be immersed in nature away from the intrusions of

the civilised, mechanised world. They give us a chance to experience the wild.

Sure, not everyone wants to sleep in a tent, but there is ample opportunity for the development of comfortable tourism facilities close to parks on adjoining private land. Indeed, there is already a great range of accommodation available near parks along the Great Ocean Road, around Halls Gap beside Grampians National Park, and in the Alpine resorts ensconced in the Alpine National Park.

By allowing developers privileged monopoly access to land within a national park, the new policy is actually disadvantaging locals who want to set up their own ecotourism facility nearby.

Indeed, fewer than 1 per cent of 20 000 national parks worldwide have any significant tourism infrastructure. Most of those either pre-date park establishment or are on pre-existing enclaves on private land.

Rather than acting as a real estate agent for parks, the government should take its role as guardian and steward of our national parks seriously.

Find out more at [www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au)

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Photo © Lamiéche

# Coast a Longing

Quentin Chester muses on the benefits of human herd behaviour



It's impossible not to admire people with a grand plan. The individuals who decide to build a yacht and really do end up sailing it around the world. Or those go-getters who haul sleds to the South Pole, or traverse Alaska on a unicycle. People with the drive to organise, plus oodles of oomph to get across the line. Regrettably, that's not me. I'm just not the big expedition type.

This home truth bobbed to the surface again during a walk beside Rocky River at the western end of Kangaroo Island. On its run to the coast, the stream tumbles across terraces of tilted stone. It all ends on a beach squished between a couple of limestone headlands.

Scramble up the northern of these rocky buttocks and you get to look at Maupertuis Bay. This is not really a bay at all, but 20 kilometres of surf coast that runs northwest from Cape de Couedic. Gazing along this beach I imagined wallowing through all that squidgy sand. And to think, that might have been my lonely quest; bent double under a rucksack for weeks on end, my hair matted with sweat and salt spray. Just because a few years back I briefly indulged the idea of trekking all the way around the island.

In this fantasy the circumnavigation would only take a month or so. Food and water stashes were placed neatly around the coast. Stage by stage I could record many insights into the nature of the shoreline – plus, of course, a heartfelt tale of personal struggles and my inner journey. At the end of the circuit it would be a simple exercise of strolling into my hometown, sending a few tweets and clinching the movie deal.

This daydream lasted but a few minutes. It ran aground on one tiny detail: I was never going to get my act together to even start the walk. And the steely motivation to flog along the beaches and cliff-tops day after day? Forget it. Besides, who wants to stake their celebrity future on an island with doggy-sounding names like Maupertuis?

The difficulty here is not simply the allure of slackderdom. There's also the issue of scattiness; a twirly failure to keep focus on a cause or mission. I'm just not that single-minded. Most days I'm not minded at all.

So be it. And good luck to people who want to kayak Bass Strait. Or the dighards flogging along the Great Divide. Same goes for the worthy-cause fundraisers pushing wheelbarrows across the Nullabor and shopping trolleys to Darwin. (Though, just quietly, enough already with these marathon charity stunts.)

For all my resistance to outsized adventures, the occasional amble does appeal. In this respect, Kangaroo Island's shoreline is obliging. Most of it is untouched, there's scenery galore and you rarely have to climb anything steeper than a long jump pit. Best

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**The motley mob is bound by a nudge-and-wink understanding that our backyard is really rather excellent.**

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of all it lends itself to little flurries of attention; a day walk here, a two-hour stroll there.

In this way the coast suits another habit. Having finally got involved in an activity, I like to advance in fitful, faltering bursts. None of that full-steam-ahead palaver for me, it's piecemeal or nothing. Edging slowly forward, pausing and wavering. That's how I work and live. Thus even simple tasks – say, vacuuming or the dishes – can take most of a morning. Now this is mainly a case of being hopelessly distractible. But it's also to do with another odd little problem. Let's call it a difficulty with endings.

So month by month I wandered little bits of shoreline. Skulking about, mostly solo, on wind-whacked headlands and vacant slips of sand. The tricky thing about the coast, however, is that it's linear. Unless you've

lucked onto an especially skinny promontory, the chances are that by the end of the outing the kick-off point will be a long way back.

Access is the other snag. Like most of the state, KI's outer rim is coastal reserve. In theory, it's fair game for us in the itinerant classes. However, getting to the shoreline often means tromping across somebody else's paddocks. And, this being an island, some of the crustier landholders exercise, shall we say, a robust approach to strangers. Suffice to note, it helps in the access department if all your grandparents were born and buried here. Or better still, your uncle booted the winning grand final goal six years running.

Which is why the spouse and I started tagging along on the local walking club's day trips. We're not the only blow-ins among the group, but there are a lot of hardcore locals, including a few with an ancestry going back five or six generations; back to the days when the main industry in these parts involved chucking harpoons at passing marine mammals. Now, if these island descendants can't swing entry to some locked-up stretch of coast, nobody can.

As a suave, ex-mainland bushwalker I was deluded enough to think the club might be a trifle low-key and bumpkinish for a wanderer of my refined outdoor tastes. I imagined tolerating certain gaucheries would be the price paid for getting to hitch a ride. Of course, as it turned out, this mob of farmers was fitter, better equipped and more jet setting than I have ever been.

As they stride ahead with their swish trekking poles and expedition apparel I lurch behind, bent over in tatty 1980s gear like some Depression-era swagman. During lunch stops they reminisce about their latest jaunt along the Camino de Santiago or trek in the high Annapurnas. Meanwhile, I'm stuck recounting that day in 1987 when I dropped my chips into the Kiama blowhole.

Still, the good folk of the KI walkers are nothing if not tolerant, and ingenious with transport logistics too. They know every farm track and fire trail that's ever been blazed. That means our group has been able to access crannies of the coast few people have even heard of, and, thanks to assorted car shuffles, we've been able to extricate ourselves from far-flung cliff-tops and estuaries with minimal fuss. Given enough fencing wire, these farmer types would have

Kangaroo Island bushwalker Chris Whitham takes a seaside stroll on the granite terraces at remote Cape Marsaint in Vivonne Bay Conservation Park, Kangaroo Island.  
Photo: Quentin Chester



had Apollo 13 back home in half the time.

With each new excursion, my ingrained fear of 'organised' club walking softened. Step by step I learned to accept the niggling strangeness of belonging to a group that would want to have me as a member. We walked and talked. We laughed and told stories. I met new people. Nice, friendly, normal people who shared cakes they baked and fruit they'd grown. It was okay. Sure, I could barely keep up with them. And, yes, I learnt more about sheep than any town boy should know. But I didn't go mad. Or die.

In fact, it was more than okay. Just between you and me, these people are sitting on a trekker's gold mine. Kangaroo Island's 550-kilometre coastline is essentially one continuous spectacle that's just made for bushwalking. There's not too many places left in the earth's temperate parts with so few people – people who also get the chance to wander this freely. It's like having an empty

shoreline almost as long as that from Sydney to Eden all to ourselves.

This might explain why these walks succeed. The motley mob is bound by a nudge-and-wink understanding that our backyard is really rather excellent. In other words, we're on a winner and let's make the most of it. For the laggards amongst us that's invigorating. So too the realisation that several of our number were on a quiet, long-term quest to walk around the entire island. Slowly, year by year, they were filling in the gaps. My kinda guys.

Some walks have been placid half-day mooches. By contrast, our ventures to more outlying capes, have involved hauls of 27 kilometres or more. Usually this has us pounding across cliff tops where time has riddled the limestone in a myriad of ankle-snapping ways. As waves crash, spray flies and the booming swell shudders through hollowed chambers and overhangs under

our boots. It can get brain-bendingly remote out there. Some days make Tassie's South Coast Track seem about as wild as the Manly Corso.

These longer slogs are a reminder that the likelihood of me ever doing these stretches on my own are roughly zilch. Slipstreaming with a bigger group has got me all emboldened, and has me seeing things differently. A couple of years into it and the island edge is no longer a random spill of scenery and beaches but an entity. At some point all the experiences began to merge. So too the stories and the pictures.

Skipping through the hundreds of photos parked on my hard drives is to access more than images. They're windows on a living shoreline that encircles and emerges. Month to month the idea of the place seems to morph in my head. With each new storm, or walk, or scrap of history the legend of the coast grows some more. It became a fixation. From little things...as they say. And, given my storytelling habitat, there was no chance of keeping a lid on all this.

Which is how I ended up assembling an album of images with captions. It wasn't about being definitive. I simply wanted to give any sod who cared a sight of KI's rim from many angles. It was about sharing what I felt. For a community trying to decide how to protect an island, it didn't seem right to have so many places unseen and unknown. So became *Kangaroo Island: Coast to Coast*. (See my website below for details.) Yes, it looks like a book. But as a digital print-on-demand project the notion is it will continue to evolve year to year. It's more an interim piece of reportage; a line drawn in the sand that will soon enough be taken by the tide.

This suits me fine. I'm not really into final words. Most of my life has been about teasing at loose ends; messing them up, adding new ones, and seeing what sense if any can be divined from the muddle. Anyone who's that kind of fidget can't help but revel in the coast. Out there it's always a restless work in progress, especially on an island where the edge has no terminus. You get to keep going and tinkering, reassembling moments piece by piece, so that one day you will find yourself walking a lonely surf beach and realise you're bumbling along Maupertuis Bay on a morning when the sand is firm – and the story starts again. **W**

*A Wild contributor since issue no 3, Quentin Chester is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places. Website: [www.quentinchester.com](http://www.quentinchester.com) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/QuentinChester](https://www.facebook.com/QuentinChester)*



# David Cole

*Sylvia Varnham O'Regan talks to Australia's ninth 'Seven-Summitteer'*

**A**t 6600 metres up Aconcagua – a mountain in South America's Andes range known for its high winds and unpredictable conditions – Australian-born climber David Cole realised he couldn't go any further.

An hour earlier he had stopped to warm up his feet and toes, which had lost all feeling in the freezing weather, but he couldn't. When his climbing partner Jimmy Herbaugh reached the point at which Cole was sitting, he was having the same problem, and the pair made the difficult decision to abort their pursuit for the summit.

A lot was on the line for Cole. Having already spent two and a half weeks on the mountain and aborted another attempt on its east side, with diminishing food supplies and bad weather on the way, he had a creeping fear that history was going to repeat itself. Eleven years earlier he had tried, unsuccessfully, to climb Aconcagua, and he was determined to make it to the top this time.

Summitting the mountain would mark the end of Cole's quest to climb the world's 'Seven Summits' – the highest peaks in each of the seven continents – that began in 1999 when he climbed Australia's Mount

Kosciuszko, and was set to end on this trip in December 2011.

The pair set out early the following morning, hoping to get some sun on their backs as they tried, once again, to reach the top.

'I was nervous,' Cole says. 'If I didn't summit on that particular day it would probably mean having to go back for the third time.'

'In the end, I was fortunate. The weather just held and I was strong on the day.'

He made it to the top and became only the ninth Australian to climb all seven summits. It was a long way from Maryborough, Victoria, where Cole grew up.



*Summit of Vinson Massif, Antarctica, November 2011. Photos supplied by David Cole*

COLE'S LOVE OF the outdoors started early and grew when he moved to Melbourne at 18 years of age. It was there he began taking trips up the High Country to go bushwalking, and later became interested in bigger adventures.

At the end of the 1990s, with a job offer in the US, he made plans to travel to Rio de Janeiro for the millennium. He and two friends planned to climb Aconcagua – then considered a hiking peak – while they were in South America. It was Cole's first high-altitude experience and despite the disappointment of having to turn back just shy of the top (or perhaps because of it), he was hooked.

In the following five years he lived in the US and, between working full-time in the automotive industry (as he still does today), Cole went on numerous expeditions in South America, Canada, Mexico and the west coast of the United States.

Usually he climbed alone; other times with a local guide or small group of friends. He liked to stay independent and shied away from organised tours.

But it wasn't solitude he was looking for. 'It's all just the adventure. Looking at the map around the world, looking at some interesting peaks and seeing what's attainable,' he says.

As for the mental and physical challenges of scaling the world's highest mountains, Cole says that's all part of the appeal.

'I like to put myself in an environment



*High on the Lhotse Face, approaching the South Col, Everest, May 2008.*

**'A lot of the appeal was in the travelling,' he says. 'Without the goal of climbing the seven summits, I'm not sure I would necessarily have visited all of the continents.'**

where I challenge myself in both senses. That's what I enjoy. And the mountains are a great place to do that.'

One of the most testing environments Cole experienced was Alaska's Mt McKinley, also known as Denali, meaning 'the high one'. At 6198 metres, McKinley is the highest peak in the United States and, due to its proximity to the Arctic Circle, prone to extreme weather. Cole climbed the notoriously difficult West Buttress route of the mountain with a small group of friends.

'For the three weeks we were on the mountain there was a lot of work; carrying loads, shovelling snow, cooking in frigid conditions. Everyone had to really pull their weight,' he says.

Another memorable peak was the iconic Mt Everest, which appealed to Cole long before he began alpine climbing. On a

backpacking trip in 1992 he walked from the village of Jiri in northeast Nepal to Everest's base camp.

'Everest always had an allure,' he says. 'It has that depth of mountaineering history.'

He returned to Nepal in 2008 and reached the mountain's summit. He went on to reach the remaining five summits: Mt Elbrus (Europe), Denali (North America), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Vinson Massif (Antarctica) and Aconcagua (South America), in the following years. He had already climbed Mt Kosciuszko in 1999.

NOW BASED IN Thailand, Cole is newly married and he and his wife Robbie are expecting their first child in November. But he shows no signs of slowing down.

'I get restless if I don't do anything physical,' he says. 'My plan is to continue

climbing as long as I can.'

And he's never short of things to do. Aside from mountaineering, Cole is a keen marathon runner, paraglider and traveller.

'A lot of the appeal was in the travelling,' he says. 'Without the goal of climbing the seven summits, I'm not sure that I would necessarily have visited all of the continents.'

But he did visit all of them, a realisation that hit him while standing on the final peak of Aconcagua in December 2011. Bad weather had forced him off the hill the day before, and the memory of his first attempt 11 years earlier had never been far from his mind. But this time, after many years, air miles, highs, lows and tests of endurance, he had reached the top.

His friend and climbing partner Jimmy was two hours behind him, so Cole savoured the accomplishment alone. 'It was a sweet moment, because there was a lot working against us and it really came down to that one opportunity on that one day to have any chance of summiting the mountain,' he says.

'And I had made it.'



# Murmurs Across Millenia

*Suzan Muir* shares a physical and spiritual journey in the captivating Mutawintji National Park in west New South Wales

In the predawn, a low rhythmic drumming throbbed through our collective dreaming. We lay cocooned in our down bags, a row of plump grubs snuggled together against the cold. Beneath the lightly frosted tarp, our slow drift towards consciousness and coffee was disorientated. Didn't the five of us fall asleep alone in an unpeopled wilderness last night; an isolated place of ochre and red dirt, of twisted bonsai cypress and whispering casuarina? A place where the last people to sleep here may well have been the stone-age dwellers who left their hand stencils under the nearby overhang? And yet this morning, surely, we were hearing the communal drumming of someone who must be camped very close indeed. Had they crept in past us to make camp in the dark as we slept?

'I reckon it's those goats we saw yesterday jumping around on a rock or some hollow log,' Rodney said.

'No. It's definitely someone drumming,' Greta insisted.

As we went through our wake up rituals, the question remained: who or what had made the mysterious drumming?

Mariki quietly interrupted the morning routine. 'Look who's coming to visit!'

We glanced up and saw two curious emus strolling into camp. They tilted their heads quizzically to the side and walked slowly, their heads rocking forward on their long necks with each stride. Suddenly one of them uttered an incredibly deep-chested 'Boom' that reverberated through camp and was instantly repeated by his mate.

'That's it,' exclaimed Greta. 'That's who we heard drumming in the early hours of the morning!'

The emus, having declared their presence and examined us closely, seemed to lose interest in the strange bunch of primates and strolled away regally, drumming back and forth as they went.

It was a lovely way to begin yet another brilliant morning of our seven-day walk through the complex system of convoluted valleys and ridges of Mutawintji. An oasis of permanent water in the typically dry country of western New South Wales, the park contains rock pools, shaded by steep stone, that hold water throughout even the longest periods of drought. As such, it was a hub of numerous indigenous song-lines or trade routes for thousands of years. It was a gathering place for the local Malyankapa and Pandjikalil tribes, as well as for groups from as far away as the Flinders

Rangers and the Queensland border. Sometimes more than 1000 people came together for initiation rituals and ceremonies.

Mutawintji means 'place of green grass and waterholes' and its marbled bedrock is inscribed with magnificent petroglyphs of giant emus, kangaroos and dreamtime heroes. The artists who patiently pecked away at the soft rock with stone implements have disappeared, but the images they portrayed of their land and mythology have remained etched in the enduring stone. The petroglyph gallery is one of the two most extensive collections in Australia, and Mutawintji National Park is worth a visit for that alone. Viewing the engravings is available to everyone who goes on a ranger guided walk. Having previously seen the engravings, I was after a somewhat different Mutawintji experience this time. We managed to juggle a small window of opportunity between all our work schedules, which allowed a week for

left the track rutted and muddy and passable only to 4WD vehicles. We were excited at the prospect of travelling along the sinuous and voluptuous creeks, all alive with rainwater bubbling and singing its way over smooth stone. Mutawintji immediately after rain is an exquisite paradise. But the land doesn't announce its beauty immediately. Viewed from the car it appears a rather drab and ordinary range of low rolling hills.

When Burke and Wills arrived at Mutawintji in 1860 on their traverse of the continent they were quite unimpressed. Alan Moorehead describes their reaction in his book 'Cooper Creek', '...Burke and his party appear to have gone by Mootwingee almost with a shudder. Wills in his field-book speaks of 'gloomy gullies' and despite an abundance of water they did not camp.' Unfortunately for them they didn't have the time or the inclination to penetrate beyond the low hills into the Dreamtime wonderland hidden within.

Beginning our walk from the Mutawintji Gorge car park we walked over the steadily rising plain and in less than an hour were up and over the first unassuming ridge. The landscape changed immediately, as though stepping through a doorway, surrounding us with tortured ochre outcrops, crazy stacks of wind sculptured stone and undulating wave overhangs with an occasional jagged blue window to the sky. We headed east across a small rocky plateau and dropped into a creek line. The trickling water wound its way deep into a gorge bordered on both sides by dark brown cliffs. We found a small sandbank there just big enough for all five of us to sleep.

Dumping our packs, we climbed out of the gorge up a sloping chimney onto the flat cliff edge. The low angled sunlight made it easy to spot some engraved images of emu and kangaroo tracks, and what appeared to be a clutch of emu eggs.

Someone had spent considerable time perched on this cliff, probably enjoying the expansive view down the river as they slowly etched the footprints into the ledge. Delighted with our first discovery of petroglyphs for the trip, we carefully climbed down the chimney back to camp. As the evening shadows filled the gorge we heard goats calling to each other from the cliff lines – the plaintive cry of kids, the deeper response from the adults, and the occasional gruff snort of warning from their airy viewing platforms.



Above: Spiral etching. Opposite: The team slogs it out on a steep but short climb up a glazed runnel. All photos by Suzan Muir

a brief immersion into the back blocks. Aside from the excellent day walks that exit from the car camping ground there is very little activity in the wilderness area beyond the marked tracks, probably due to the solid level of navigational experience required travelling safely through the maze of orange domes and twisting creek lines.

We approached the park from Broken Hill on the 130-kilometre, usually dry 2WD track. A rare and recent deluge had



Goats appear to be the single biggest threat to biodiversity within the park. They thrive in semi-arid mountain environments and out-compete the native grazers. We saw few euros and no yellow-footed rock wallabies. Everywhere we walked the goats' destruction was evident. Copses of casuarinas contained no young trees. Their suckers, that were trying so valiantly to push skywards, were all pruned to ground level by the voracious grazing of the goats. There were also no saplings of the magnificent white cypress, an iconic tree of Mutawintji that clings in fantastically twisted forms to the bare orange cliffs. I worry that when the current generation of old cypress die they will be lost forever. Park management is currently trying to address the threat that goats pose to the fragile ecosystem.

We also saw terrible erosion in several valleys where the denuded orange clay had been torn away by floodwaters, leaving jagged fingers of deep washouts and piles of ripped out bushes and timber. There doesn't seem to be enough ground cover to slow down the movement of water across the soil.

Mutawintji is jointly managed by local aboriginal groups and NSW National Parks who have had an active goat removal program operating since the 1980s. In

2011, almost 10 000 goats were caught and transported for meat export. However, on our second day of walking across a high rocky plateau we witnessed at least 10 newly-born kids in just a couple of kilometres. There was some debate over whether to add baby goat to our curry that night.

**The first of several galleries of ochre art stencils appeared beneath the overhang – wonderfully clear impressions of generations of hands of the hunter-gatherers who made this land home for thousands of years.**

Jon was all for it. 'Shall I chase down a few for dinner?'

Mariki, the staunchest vegetarian of our group, mused over our probable obligations as visitors to the park. We reached a consensus that we did have enough food with us anyway.

The Gammon Ranges in South Australia has had great success with its feral goat management by closing the park for a couple weeks each year and allowing amateur shooters in for a carefully controlled cull of the animals. Hopefully, Mutawintji will now be able to implement a more thorough control program with

state legislation passed in June this year allowing shooters access to national parks in New South Wales.

One of our lunch stops was in a sandy creek bed beneath a steep cliff line with a very inviting-looking cave at the top. After eating our bread, cheese and sprouts we

again left our packs behind and climbed slowly up to the impressive overhang, starting two Wedge-tailed Eagles. They soared back and forth across the cave's mouth, close enough that we could hear each powerful stroke of their wings. The first of several galleries of ochre art stencils appeared beneath the overhang – wonderfully clear impressions of generations of hands of the hunter-gatherers who made this land home for thousands of years. One of their descendants once told me that the more senior a person was within the tribe, the more of their forearm they were permitted

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to stencil onto the wall, and that typically the elders placed their hands higher on the wall than the younger people.

We eventually left the gallery to push through a maze of turtle domes clad with scales of orange rock, that Jon described as 'being just like Purnululu [the Bungle Bungles] but without the steroids'.

Throughout the entire walk we continually climbed and descended. From high ridges we had fantastic views of the next valley, each one luring us downwards, offering the possibility of yet another mysterious discovery hidden in its folds. On our fourth day, looking down from a ridge, we could see a dark cleft between two domes. It seemed like the obvious place to explore next. A short 15-minute stroll through hot sunlight had us standing at the entrance. The air temperature cooled as we entered the small chasm and a trickling creek led us to a silken green pool. The sensuous quality of the smooth cold stone around the water called out to be caressed, so we rested there in the shade.

Several metres from the water was a short horizontal slot in the cliff face. Jon, being The Man Who Can't Stay Still, just had to have a look. He bent to peer under the low overhang and after a few moments beckoned us to come over and see. Bright sunlight fell a little way into the slot but



*A cave overhang that sheltered us from a brief southerly squall.*

beyond that the crevice was in deep shadow. Within were several skeletons, mummified by the dry air and in various states of decay: two euros with their brown hide stretched tightly over their bones, hollow eyes and shiny black claws, a goat with curved horns, and a perfectly intact skeleton of a fox.

'They come here to die,' Jon said.

'There's shelter and water. It's a safe place that they've been drawn to for their last days, dark and moist.'

I couldn't help but think it was rather like returning to the womb.

The place we chose to camp on our second last night had to be my favourite because of some beautiful art that wasn't immediately apparent on our arrival. We

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Clockwise from above: The magnificent Mutawintji Gorge, one of the two entrance routes to wilderness walking within the park. A marked track offers a leisurely half day return walk from the carpark to Mutawintji Gorge; Perhaps the single biggest threat to biodiversity in the park – the prolific feral goat. Cute but deadly if you are a native plant in a fragile semi-arid environment; Struggling native vegetation grazed almost to ground level as the succulent regrowth is very attractive to goats.

chose a flat amphitheatre at the head of a creek that fell away steeply, offering a great view out over the plains to the east. On either side of us, cliffs of jumbled rocks cradled the first of a series of small rock-holes that stepped their way down the course of the creek. Broad slabs of grey rock that were glazed with a shiny weathered patina surrounded the rock hole, providing the perfect place to sit and contemplate the vast grass land as the evening light gilded it with yellow hues.

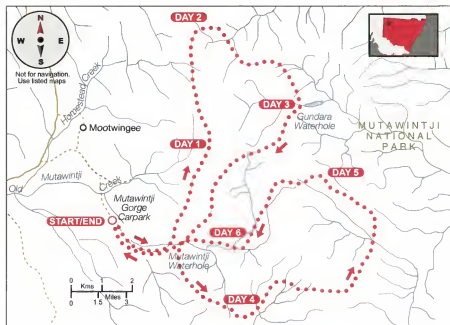
I was busy cooking up a Thai green curry and Mariki, Rodney and Greta were

stringing out the tarp. Jon had dropped down to the rock hole to gather some water for brews when he called out excitedly: 'Hey, check this out.'

As I made my way across to Jon, a beautifully etched spiral appeared on one of the slabs in the low light. It was about 30 centimetres in diameter. In an arc away from the spiral were two smaller etchings; a crescent and a circle. There was such a strong feeling that the person who had made the shapes was deliberately communicating with people in the future. It would have taken many hours to engrave

those patterns into the rock. Perhaps the repetitive motion of pecking out the stone had lulled the creator into a meditative trance. Whatever the creator's state of mind at their inception, the viewing of the spiral brought the spirit of the maker into our own hearts. There was a clear connection between that person and us, standing in the twilight, viewing the spiral in a state of reverent awe.

My connection to my own ancestry of hunting and gathering is intensified when I see ancient art. I also feel a poignant sense of loss of that way of interacting with life; the simplicity of living in a way that is mostly determined by what the environment can sustainably offer and the loss of experiencing land and other animals as being a continuum of self. The more time I spend in wilderness areas, the more moments I have where I feel the land flowing through me; filling me. It is this extraordinary experience that keeps drawing me away from the world of modern *Homo sapiens*. I crave the deep renewal I feel as my focus shifts towards this relationship. This merging gives me a sense of meaning and fills me with absolute joy – so much so that the overarching plan for the rest of my life is to open myself to the experience of wilderness as often as I can. **W**



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# Identity Crisis on the Teton Crest Trail

*Elsbeth Callender* discovers herself – and a few surprises – in northwest Wyoming



Strapped into the front seat of an unfamiliar 4WD I steal a glance over my shoulder through a forest of mounted automatic weapons to where my companion, Lance, is crammed in the back with the packs. Our passports have just been returned after an extensive radio check to establish if we are or are not convicted felons: 'Caucasian female, 37, six feet tall, unwashed hair, khaki t-shirt.' The uniformed man gets into the driver seat and says we will be taken to Teton Village.

How did we come to this?

Only a few days ago we were rock stars in matching black walking outfits and mirrored sunglasses lining up for the aerial tram to take us 1000 metres up from Teton Village to Rendezvous Mountain. In front and behind retirees in summer vacation uniforms of well-ironed elbow and knee revealing pastel attire have no perambulation plans for the top. The guy collecting our tickets practically asks for our autograph when he hears we're off on a four-day bender.

It's early September and already midday; the track is calling but Corbet's 'waffles at 10 600 feet' Café has a far more convincing tone. We enter side by side like a couple of gunslingers from outta town. Pastel patrons from the previous tram drop their half-chewed food and the place goes quiet. Two waffles come sliding down the counter. Only after we've devoured our meals and belched in unison does someone dare to come forward and ask why our bags are so big. At the mention of the word 'hiking' an incredulous murmur ripples around the room. The fact we're planning three nights out makes us instant celebrities. 'Smile hikers,' says one man thrusting his tiny camera towards us as we try to leave.

'No paparazzi,' I say, making for the door.

We locate the true beginning of the Teton Crest Trail and get on our way towards Marion Lake – a common day walk from Rendezvous. Having both done extensive online 'bear management' research, interviewed locals, grilled rangers and read relevant literature acquired in Jackson, we

are veritable experts on the subject. So as we pass lone walkers (Rule 1 of BM: never walk alone) with headphones on (Rule 2 of BM: keep alert to your surroundings) and groups walking quietly (Rule 3 of BM: make noise) we purse our judgemental lips and telepathically communicate 'they'll learn' between us.

After we traverse the rocky plateaus of Jedediah Smith Wilderness – where orange wildflowers grow between cracks as though reclaiming a city – and re-enter Grand Teton National Park, we fail our Girl Guide orienteering badge. Where the clearly signposted track divides into a left fork to Death Canyon Shelf (aka the camping zone) and a right fork to a series of switchbacks plunging dramatically into Death Canyon, we choose to go right.

And we continue right.

We sink below the reach of the sun's late-afternoon rays and only after being unsure for a 700-metre drop in altitude do we decide to look at the map. We have the equivalent of 38 broken escalators to walk





Gazing in a We at Grand Teton on the approach to Hurricane Pass. All photos by Elopeth Gallender

back up as the day closes on our final reserves of energy.

On our first night in the true North American wilderness we're a couple of scaredy cats. And it's not the first time. The previous night we camped outside the park at Shadow Mountain directly across Jackson Hole from the Teton Range. Sitting around the campfire after dinner we'd taken turns reading aloud from our bear safety book to brush up before we hit the hills. After freaking ourselves out sufficiently with the sections 'If a bear comes into your camp at night' and 'If a bear comes into your tent' we notice clumps of coarse hair scattered around the campfire. By then 'Don't let fear ruin your trip' is unachievable.

In the morning I'm 90 years old. My legs have been aching all night and the only relief was sporadic sleep and being grabbed awake once by Lance, who wanted to share the experience of listening to a heavy-footed bear impersonator circling our tent. I drag myself out into the glorious sunshine.

Lance has brought his entire encyclopaedia collection so over breakfast we're wildlife experts. We identify the Clark's Nutcracker – a bird, in fact, as opposed to an over-enthusiastic long-legged terrier – and the Black-capped Chickadee. The

The Teton range is the youngest mountain range in Wyoming made from some of the oldest rocks on the planet – dated at nearly 2.7 billion years – and rise dramatically without foothills from Jackson Hole so that elevations in the park vary from 1937

### **My legs have been aching all night and the only relief was sporadic sleep and being grabbed awake once by Lance, who wanted to share the experience of listening to a heavy-footed bear impersonator circling our tent.**

yellow-bellied marmot that woke us with its bell-like whistle is poised like a preacher at a pulpit in the talus slope. Marmots not only hibernate during the cold months but, in northwest US at lower altitudes, also estivate over summer.

We set off that day like first time parents-to-be with more ahead of us than we could possibly imagine; at this stage Hurricane Pass is just a minute squiggle on the map.

metres to 4197 metres. The Teton Crest Trail runs north to south along the line dividing the range into its eastern and western drainages but does not, in somewhat of a geological anomaly, follow the highest peaks. This, however, does not mean the track is flat. Not remotely.

For the majority of today the track leads us through the distinctly more desert-like Jedediah Smith Wilderness. Grand Teton is





Left: The tent plonked at the first opportunity on Death Canyon Shelf. Bottom left: Doing a balancing act over rushing water on Lake Solitude Trail.

often visible just above the horizon as though checking on us. At the sight of it I think of Paul Petzoldt.

We're passing through these mountains on foot as the eastern tribes of the Shoshone people of the region did. Despite the archetypal image of the 'Indian' warrior on horseback, distinct variations exist between each tribe – some being more warfaring than others, for instance – and in this area it was only those at lower altitudes who took to horses. Evidence of humans in the Tetons dates back more than 11 000 years yet with no indication of permanent settlement. It is believed that the Shoshone spiritual relationship with the Teton range was strong and stone enclosures on some of the peaks, including Grand Teton, were used during vision quests. As early as 1868 the Shoshone were moved away to the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming.

Climbing out of Alaska Basin that afternoon we catch our breath at the top and look back to where we snacked beside the track to see a bear sitting in the multi-coloured meadow of lupine and columbine. We're too far away to warn the walker but close enough to see in his stride that he hasn't noticed the animal and, like a theatre audience watching a scene unfold in which the protagonist is unknowingly in mortal danger, we can only observe in helpless silence. The bear remains motionless as the walker gets closer. Only metres away from the wild animal he finally halts. The audience is on the edge of their seats. Neither man nor beast moves for a few seconds. Then the walker recommences in the same direction, though more slowly. The bear still sits. The curtain falls.

For the entire Teton Crest Trail I feel a bit



like that ignorant protagonist myself. Bears are everywhere. Watching us. We clap and call as we cross meadows where they might be grazing below the grass-line or as we enter scrub or forest where they may be loitering amongst the foliage. The idea is to

warn them we're coming because a startled bear is most likely to feel threatened and charge. We know that bears smell and hear us approaching and move off out of sight. When we've left the area they return to continue gobbling huckleberries or ripping apart rotting insect-ridden logs, but we never see them come and go.

If the Tetons are our church and Teton Crest Trail our road to salvation, then Hurricane Pass is the stairway to heaven. At the highest point the land falls away in scree slopes either side of the path. In one direction a scoured valley disappears into eternity and to the other is a glacial lake on which icebergs float like lilies. After we consider these, we drop into Cascade Canyon and find a creekside campsite.

'We are not a threat,' I silently explain to a moose we come upon the next morning wallowing on the track in its beloved sagebrush. Moose are considered one of the more dangerous animals in North America due to their unpredictability. Although we know that it knows we're there we pretend we don't know it knows we know and loop around it off the track. This is a real 'out of the frying pan into the fire' situation: avoiding a moose by creeping quietly through bear habitat. Like FBI agents on a drug bust we are hyper-alert, bear spray poised, covering one another's backs. I wonder as we relocate the track.

At the northern end of the Teton Crest Trail we don't take the more direct way out via Cascade Canyon Trail but continue north towards Paintbrush Canyon. At the obsoletely-named Lake Solitude, where we encounter more people than we've seen in two days, we take as long as possible over lunch before leaving them behind and rising half a kilometre in altitude over a couple of hours of slog. It's worth it; if Hurricane Pass made of us humble and devout worshippers then Paintbrush Divide renders us fundamentalist born-again. We descend into the Canyon and Lance slips on a snowfield so that he is seated on his right hand. I'm brought to my knees yet again from the pain of another full day of walking. 'Paul Petzoldt would have been proud,' I think to myself as I crawl into the tent.

With a mate and a map, American Paul Petzoldt (1908-1999) made his first ascent of Grand Teton at the age of 16 wearing



Up to Paintbrush Canyon is an exercise in endurance.

cowboy boots and jeans. At the time he was the youngest person on written record to have made the ascent. The experience, which he and his friend only just survived, made him realise he had much to learn about mountaineering. 'If we had known what hypothermia meant, we would have frozen to death,' he told an interviewer 70 years later. He climbed the peak many more times and in 1984 made a successful ascent on the 60th anniversary of his first summit.

Between his first and last ascent of 'the Grand', Paul Petzoldt was a person of many and varied identities: a footballer, a

gardener, a fur trapper, a travelling lecturer, a used car salesman, a chef, a golfer, a dude ranger, a conservationist, a wilderness educator, a mountaineer, and a downhill and slalom ski champion. He may once have even accidentally killed a man.

The gently winding mountain path through the pine forest the next morning is as perfectly perfect as a 1960s film set. Ground squirrels dart about in the dappled morning sunlight and, as we pass the gushing mountain stream on a hairpin bend, Lance leans casually against a polystyrene boulder, pushes his cowboy hat

to the back of his shiny head, fake-strums his fake banjo and woos me with a corny mountain serenade.

After emerging at String Lake we make like hitchhikers but the cars that pass veer well away as though they'd rather hit oncoming traffic than get a whiff of us. Then a 4WD pulls over and a young man in uniform jumps out. 'Scared the older folk,' he says with a smile. 'It's only newly-weds and nearly deads around at this time of the season'. I tell him that we're neither. We're satisfied walkers getting a lift back to our car from a charming Park Ranger. **W**

## CAMPING

Teton Crest Trail backcountry campsites can be pre-booked between 5 January and 15 May or within 24 hours beforehand. For information on backcountry camping, bear safety and reservations go to: [nps.gov/grte/planyourvisit/back.htm](http://nps.gov/grte/planyourvisit/back.htm)

## BEARS

Knowing how to behave and react is your best defence against a bear. Peruse a few reference websites as you're planning your trip and talk to locals and rangers when you get there. *Bear Aware: The quick reference bear country survival guide* is a useful tool but a hopeless weapon.

## MAPS

National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map 202 - Grand Teton National Park (1:80 000 & 1:31 680) marks backcountry sites and is waterproof and tear resistant. It's imperative on the track and useful when pre-booking campsites: [natgeomaps.com](http://natgeomaps.com)

## WHEN TO GO

Teton Crest Trail is popular during the northern hemisphere summer with mid-July to mid-August being the peak season. Aim for either side of that to avoid the crowds, though not too far either side (probably no later than mid-September) or the weather may commandeer your trip.

## TIME & DISTANCE

Camping zones are long sections of the track so daily distances can vary quite significantly depending on where you pitch. These are ours:

**Day 1:** Rendezvous Mt Tram to Death Canyon Shelf - 14km/7hr

**Day 2:** Death Canyon Shelf to South Fork Cascade - 14.75km/10hr

**Day 3:** South Fork Cascade to Lower Paintbrush Canyon - 20km/10hr

**Day 4:** Lower Paintbrush Canyon to String Lake Trailhead - 6.75km/3hr





# *From rocks to roads...* AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

*Warren Thomas* stumbles across a variety of surfaces during a south-north attempt of the Penguin Cradle Trail

**T**he click of backpack buckles heralded our departure from the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre on a Saturday morning in November. Three 40 somethings, Ian, John and I, set off on one of those Tasmanian days that any reasonable person would expect – cold, overcast and drizzling. The Parks and Wildlife Service had our itinerary, so they would have been expecting us to immediately detour down the Enchanted Walk and the Pencil Pine Track, to head due west from Carter Tarn across the button grass plain and join the Penguin Cradle Trail north of Heap of Rocks. However, they would not have expected us to 'misplace' the Pencil Pine Track and to

endure an embarrassing re-emergence at Cradle Mountain Lodge. So much for four years training as a surveyor.

The Penguin Cradle Trail is lightly used, well maintained and stretches 76 kilometres from its start near the Bass Strait town of Penguin to the doorstep of Cradle Mountain Lodge. By linking with the Overland Track, the opportunity exists for a largely continuous walk from Bass Strait to Lake St Clair.

The Trail can be undertaken in a south to north direction, as we elected, being equally marked either way. A disadvantage of the south to north approach is that the published Coast to Cradle guide book by Nic Haygarth and other track notes will need to be read

'backwards' – most being written for north to south journeys.

Feeling a little deflated we restarted our adventure, this time on the marked Penguin Cradle Trail. It wasn't long before we found ourselves following aged snow poles over mysterious hilltops. The sloshy button grass and constant drizzle made mincemeat of those waterproofing claims on my new boots. Misty views of Heap of Rocks started to appear. Lichen covered bushes dotted the button grass plain. Further on, eucalypt and pockets of myrtle forest were passed as we slipped into the valley of Fleece Creek.

A logjam provided a suitable crossing of one minor stream. John tested its stability

with a successful crossing Ian confidently approached. He put one foot on a seemingly sound log but the rot had set in. He fell only a metre to the bank below, snagging his side on an upturned tree root before landing heavily under the weight of his 20-kilogram pack. Some bruising and several persistent aches were a constant reminder as he bravely battled on.

The Penguin Cradle Trail follows the left bank of Fleece Creek down to its junction with Speeler Creek and the Vale River. It passes through impressive pandanus groves and beside the tumbling Fleece Creek Cascades, before crossing the Vale River high on a timber footbridge. The old rough-hewn deck-only footbridge which we crossed (now replaced) seemed to be inspired by Indiana Jones and will be missed – its character rightfully though giving way to safety.

The campsite at Fourways was a welcome sight and gave indications of the attention to track maintenance carried out by volunteers from the North West Walking Club. A generous supply of cut and split wood was stacked beside a stone fireplace – what a luxury.

The weather didn't really suit lingering campfire tales so it wasn't long before we slipped into our sleeping bags. Undaunted, Ian read us a bedtime story – extracts from Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*. The book tells the tale of Bryson and his mate Katz, two inexperienced, out-of-condition 40-somethings, and their somewhat challenged attempt on the 3500-kilometre Appalachian Trail in the US. We'd like to think there were no similarities.

Sunday morning brought with it clearing skies as a heavy fog lifted from the valley. Trees glistened in a silvery light. Alas, the fickle Tasmanian weather closed in again as we climbed a tussocky slope to a saddle below Mt Beecroft, 250 metres above the campsite. The rain and low cloud persuaded us to cancel the planned side trip to the summit of Mt Beecroft (1136 metres). A pity really – the guidebook foretold that the view included the sea in two directions.

The rest of the day was spent wrapped inside rain gear while sloshing head down through boggy button grass on the southern end of the Black Bluff Range. Rocky Mountain (1030 metres) passed almost unnoticed; so too did the Cradle Mountain Link Road. The snow pole line we'd been following passed below the summit of Prospect Mountain (1034 metres). A short walk to the top located the rock cairn constructed by Henry Hellyer when he surveyed the boundaries of the Van Diemen's Land Company's grants in 1831. It's reputedly one of the oldest known European structures in northwest Tasmania and bears a plaque in recognition of Hellyer's work.

An hour later, with rain still tumbling, we



**An hour later, with rain still tumbling, we limped sideways down a treeless grassy hillside to reach the exposed Bare Mountain campsite. How apt, I thought.**

limped sideways down a treeless grassy hillside to reach the exposed Bare Mountain campsite. How apt, I thought. The designated campsite was the only suitable site in this highland valley and was marked only by a metal box on a stand holding a Penguin Cradle Trail logbook. Few had passed by here in the past six months.

Monday morning again brought a lifting fog. Rocky outcrops high above us became visible, as did the Vale of Belvoir below. The distant peaks were lifting their foggy skirts. Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff soon exposed themselves totally.

Packed and on the track, the weather all but cleared, with only pocket showers hanging sparsely around a huge horizon. This section of the Black Bluff Range was pleasant walking with constant views of Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff. Small highland water features broke up the grassy tops on the way to the imposing Black Bluff

(1339 metres). Remnant snow hung on its rocky slopes as we walked through a short-lived hailstorm before descending the valley of Winter Brook to an ideal campsite on the south bank of Paddys Lake – a highland tarn sitting above the 1000-metre contour.

As quickly as it started, the storm passed and calmness set in. Billowing clouds on the horizon contrasted with blue skies behind. The surrounding mountains created stark silhouettes against the deepening blue sky as the sun set below an unseen horizon. The reflected clouds in the lake rippled as a platypus glided by.

About the time the Tokay was settling and the temperature approaching zero, the far rim of the tarn became indistinct and gradually disappeared. A surreal mist glided across the water and swirled around the peaks above us. We sat silently in shared solitude, the mist enveloping our campsite. A close encounter was surely upon us, but





*A moment to check the map after leaving Fourways campsite.*

before we were whisked off for some alien interrogation, the mist quietly dissolved.

The Penguin Cradle Trail from Paddys Lake follows the route of the former Brookes Track established in 1930 by George Taylor, an Ulverstone watchmaker and photographer. The track drops 700 metres in elevation to reach Taylors Flats on the banks of the River Leven. A picnic area with tables and chairs provides a civilised place for a pack break. A long drop toilet squeezed into an old telephone box seemingly provides a duel purpose.

One disappointing aspect of the Penguin Cradle Trail is its reliance on formed roads to link several of its sections. The 2½-kilometre stretch from Taylors Flats along a quiet dirt road through farming flats was bearable. The 13-kilometre stretch at Gunns Plains along bitumen road, however, was not. But more on that later.

Returning to the bush, the track followed the River Leven towards the sheer-sided, Leven Canyon. At the Leven Splits a substantial footbridge provided access across the narrow gorge to the Loongana Road. The river below gathered speed and force for its descent through the canyon.

In contrast to the first three days walking across grassy mountaintops, the next two days were spent following the raging torrent that was the River Leven. It surged through the constricting canyon to plummet over a waterfall before racing through its steep-sided, valley hideaway. The track avoided the more impassable part of the canyon by

climbing almost 300 metres over the Loongana Range and then sidling through heavy forest to rejoin the river a kilometre further downstream. The climb was exhausting yet exhilarating, with views back across the canyon to Taylors Flats and the Black Bluff Range beyond.

The River Leven Gorge was tough. Fallen timber regularly covered the track as the wet ground, winds and steep slopes worked against the trees. Scrambling under, climbing over and pushing through the vegetation made the going quite slow. Well after 6pm our thoughts were turning to camp... but where? By 8.30pm a forecasted campsite on a small island could not be located so a flat area on the track was voted to be our best option.

With a good night's sleep behind us we ventured farther into the gorge. It wasn't long before we walked into Blackwood Camp and wished we'd been there last night. It was a flat site on the banks of the river, suitable for three or four tents. This was the pick of the campsites within the gorge. The logbook showed that few people had ventured to this spot since the previous summer.

As we climbed away from Blackwood Camp, a tiger snake slid quietly past. A little further, after passing some poor campsites, we pitched tents on a sandy river flat and soaked up the rest of the afternoon. With good weather and plenty of time, it was the place to experiment with some gourmet campfire meals. Hungarian goulash pancakes

and apple-cake-in-a-billy were delightful.

Next morning I arose well before my companions to take some photographs in the early morning light. Although the skies were blue, 'storm clouds' were brewing. Some tension in the group led to a few terse words and quite a 'frosty' breakfast.

Setting off in a sulky silence, we soon approached and ascended the Northern Gates – two opposing ridges through which the River Leven squeezes before spilling out onto Gunns Plains. At the top of the Northern Gates we stood and reflected on the arduous, yet rewarding nature of the past two-days' walk through the gorge. The view upstream was of a river at play. The view downstream was of a river meandering across Gunns Plains, pleased with its efforts.

With some trepidation and regret we descended from the tops and walked from the bush track onto the bitumen of Lowana Road. It was only 13 kilometres and while quite beautiful as a farmed valley, Gunns Plains was a most unwelcome section of 'track'. We had rejoined civilisation before we were ready. The experience was only softened by the friendly, helpful nature of the locals who willingly gave lifts in the back of their utes. Two rides and a little walking later we arrived at the Gunns Plains shop and were understandably tempted by hot pies, milkshakes and chocolates. Feeling a little bloated, we camped the night at the private campground on Winduss Rd. The return to the bush would have to wait until tomorrow.





A photograph of a cave interior, showing layered rock formations and stalactites. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and colors of the rock.

# Bachsten Beauty

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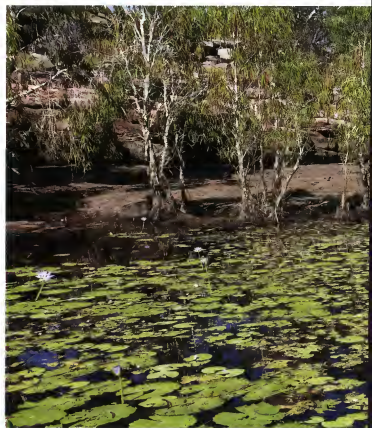
Tucked away in the West Kimberley, *Grant Dixon* captures the brilliant colours and sights around Bachsten Creek

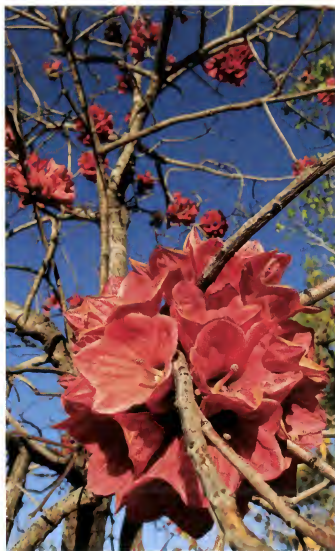
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Wandjina (ghost or beings) rock art painted during the past 4000 years.







Clockwise from top left: Eroded sandstone tor near Bachsten Creek; lilies on a waterhole; flowers of the Sticky Kurrajong (*Brachychiton viscidulus*), a plant endemic to the Kimberley region; fig tree roots on sandstone cliffs beside a waterfall.

Grant Dixon is a widely-published Tasmanian-born nature photographer and professional natural scientist. He has undertaken extended journeys on every continent, with camera never far from hand, and considers there is plenty of scope for further exploration of the vast Kimberley region. More of his images can be viewed at [www.GrantDixonPhotography.com.au](http://www.GrantDixonPhotography.com.au)



# ONE DAY SERIES

A wide-angle photograph of a person walking away from the camera on a dirt path that winds through a lush, green landscape. The path is bordered by tall, golden grass on the right and a wooden fence on the left. In the background, rolling green hills lead down to a rocky coastline where waves are breaking. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

With the arrival of his first child, *Hugh de Kretser* conducts some forced research on the benefits of day walking

The whale gently arches its back and raises its tail for a final wave goodbye before the long dive around the point. On the far horizon, plumes erupt from blowholes. Then closer in, two more fins rise and fall. There must be around fifty humpback whales passing south in the early morning. I move down to another vantage point and notice a wallaby munching on grass just off the track. On the cliff edge, a feral goat with impressive horns watches the parade below. A pack of dolphins, swimming among diving terns in the surging waves at the base of the cliffs, completes the picture.

What a great wild encounter. And yet,

while I'm in a conservation area, I'm not in a particularly wild place – only 20 minutes walk from the car near the lighthouse at Cape Byron in New South Wales. I am wearing a pack on my back, but the 11-kilogram load is not food and a tent but my 18-month-old son, who is more interested in the bush turkeys than the whales.

This is how I get my wild fixes these days. Bite-sized day walk doses, mixed with camping trips, weekends at our bush cabin and mountain bike rides on Melbourne's fringe.

The arrival of our son has meant overnight trips have been put on the shelf, to be dusted off on some bright future day.

Sure, we bought a child carrier pack with plans of doing at least one overnighter with our baby out in the wild. But so far, car camping has proved challenging and rewarding enough (the projectile hurl in the tent one night tested our mettle).

So it's been more than a year since an overnight walk, and now getting close to two – and it's given me plenty of food for thought about how day walking stacks up against the overnighters. In a way, I guess I've been conducting some detailed, forced research. Well, the results are in.

Comparing the shorter form of cricket to the five-day test, West Indian superstar Viv Richards once said, 'One day cricket is like

*Strolling along the George Bass coastal walk only an hour and a half from Melbourne.*

All photos by Hugh and Kim de Kretser



fast food. No one wants to cook.' In a way, day walking is similar – a bit like fast food, it's all about access, time and convenience.

Day walking typically happens close to your home or holiday base. There's no need to plan or carry much. You can be spontaneous – just grab a sandwich, a jacket and something to drink and you're out amongst it in no time. Better still, you move quickly without a heavy pack on your back, you can take some gourmet treats for a picnic in some magical spot, then finish your walk and be home in time for a hot shower and *Touching the Void* on DVD.

In fact, I've just come back from a great day walk at Wilson's Promontory National

Park and it's a good reminder that many of the world's most amazing natural places are only a short, easy stroll away.

So, with all the convenience of day walking on my doorstep, why am I still deeply unsatisfied?

If I'm true to myself, I'm suffering some severe withdrawal symptoms caused by a lack of exposure to overnight walking over an extended period. Searching within my soul, I can see that I long for a long, wild walk.

I long for the planning and preparation of overnight walking – the maps, the logistics, the packing and the gear. I long for that 'setting off' feeling and for the aching

shoulders after hours of walking. I long for the simplicity of carrying everything you need on your back and being exposed to the elements.

I long for the intense relaxation of lying down tired but content in a tent in the middle of nowhere; a contented feeling only enhanced by some gentle rain on the fly, which parts in the morning to reveal another gorgeous day.

I long for a state of existence when the only aspect is the journey. For slowing life down for days to a walking pace – a different drifting rhythm. I long for the feeling of working your body, resting your mind and letting the wilderness flow over you.

OK – you start to see the picture. I'm a man suffering. But I'm not too far gone to completely lose perspective. There are benefits to the day walk, I tell myself earnestly, aside from convenience. And believe it or not, they are accentuated by having a baby.

You see, carrying a little person on a walk gives a whole new perspective on the bush. Through his fresh eyes, I can re-experience the wonder and the beauty as if it was the first time again; the song of a dozen lyrebirds in the valley on a misty August morning, the smell of a crushed mountain ash leaf, the sight of a wallaby crashing through the bush, the feel of a wombat turd...

Looking back, there have been some pretty superb day walks over the years. For views and variety, walking the sculptured escarpments in the Grampians from Beehive Falls to Briggs Bluff is up there. For contrast and a bit of adventure there's walking the huge Thurra Dunes in Croajingolong National Park in desert-like heat before dropping down into the cool waters of the Thurra River. Kings Canyon and Katherine Gorge are in contention for sheer spectacular scenery. Anything around Cradle Mountain rates a mention (although give me a pack for an overnight experience and I'll take it). Further afield, there's the Wadi Rum in Jordan, Tongariro in New Zealand, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Bryce, Zion, the Tetons, the Uintas and the Arches... the list goes on. It's tough to narrow it down



but one of my most memorable day walks took place in Corsica.

A pocket-sized island – only 83 kilometres across – Corsica has 21 peaks higher than 2000 metres that drop spectacularly down into beautiful coves and beaches. The entire place is criss-crossed with tracks, the 14-day GR20 being the most famous. I was bummed we didn't have our gear with us to get in there, but in the end it didn't matter because that was one day walk that'll stay with me forever.

The day before, my long-term girlfriend and I had been planning to walk out to a high cliff over the sea. I thought it would be the ideal spot to propose, so I snuck out and bought a piccolo of French champagne, chilled it and slid it into the backpack. But then, as we approached the viewpoint, the sea fog set in. My girlfriend wasn't taking my suggestions to wait until it cleared very well and we bailed, with me figuring out whether to propose on the track home or even at the kiosk where the car was parked. No, instead it was back to the apartment and sneaking the champagne back into the fridge.

**I long for the planning and preparation of overnight walking – the maps, the logistics, the packing and the gear. I long for that 'setting off' feeling and for the aching shoulders after hours of walking.**

The next day I convinced her to go on another walk around the base of 1294-metre Capu d'Ortu and stole the champagne once more into the pack. She was a bit sceptical when I suggested taking the longer track up to the top of the mountain but went with it. The scenery just kept getting better and the weather held off – it was truly spectacular. 'This could be the best day walk I've been on,' she said – music to my ears. We approached the summit and the views unfolded. It was the perfect spot to propose. Overcome by the vista and slightly weakened by vertigo, she agreed and the champagne was popped. A German tourist wandered over and asked for a drop. On the way down, two French fighter jets flew past and I swear one of them waved to us. The rest is history.

#### **POSTSCRIPT: BACK IN THE SADDLE ON MT CLEAR**

It's 8.30 on a summer's eve and we're sitting in a gorgeous flower-filled meadow just under the summit of The Nobs in the Victorian Alps. The sun is setting, the crescent moon is rising, the views are great and the wine is open. Better still, we've got two days walking ahead of us, over The Nobs, past High Cone, over Squaretop and Mt Clear, then dropping down to the car.

Yes, it's been more than two years without an overnight trip but here we are: Together. Alone. On a mountain. With a tent. Without our son. And it feels bloody good. (Forgive us when you read this son.)

When I was backpacking around the world for a year at age 21, I stopped for a week or so with a friend who was renting a



house in London. After being on the road for many months, I took great pleasure in doing humble household tasks like mowing the lawn and baking a cake. In a similar way, after a long time away from walking, even the simple tasks like rolling my mattress, packing the tent and filling up water bottles brought great pleasure; the pleasure of rituals from happy times.

A few things struck me immediately. First, it felt good to put on a heavy pack. Second, carrying a small child everywhere is good training for carrying a heavy pack. Third, day walking is simply no substitute for the overnight.

Within about 15 minutes of dropping our packs at the first night's campsite, a feeling of intense restfulness and peace came over us. Our spirits drank in the wilderness mountain vibe and we quenched thirsts that had lain dormant for many months. To be fair, the wilderness peaceful easy feeling was no doubt enhanced by the fact there was no human company with us, or to be specific no little human company with us, but it was still a strong reminder of what makes overnight walking great.

Clockwise from left: *Spectacular Tongue Point at Wilsons Promontory; More of the George Bass coastal walk; Happy days back on the overnight trail in the Victorian Alps.*

The next two days delivered the perfect return to overnight walking. A spectacular ridge-top traverse with great views, a stunning abundance of wildflowers after the drought breaking rains and a few snakes and a lightning storm to keep us on our toes.

We had the walk to ourselves, seeing no one until the last campsite near the end of the walk in a nice little saddle under Mt Clear. And who should we meet there, but Wild contributor Steve Waters, who reminded us of the other great thing about overnight trips – swapping stories with fellow walkers.

Organising overnight walks when you have a two year old is still complicated and it may be some time before we're on the track again. But for the time being, our spirits are restored and we've settled the debate: day walks are good but for me, there's no substitute for the real thing. **W**





# A Beginner's Guide to *Walking in the European Alps*



## It may be getting summery here but it's the perfect time to plan your next big overseas adventure. *Glenn van der Knijff* writes a comprehensive guide for walkers visiting the Alps for the first time

The soaring mountains and deep valleys of the grand range that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in Italy all the way to Slovenia are known as the European Alps. Between Italy and Slovenia, the Alps pass through France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein. Celebrated worldwide for its stunning scenery, cutesy mountain villages, superb skiing and challenging climbing routes, the Alps are the cradle of modern-day bushwalking, rock climbing and mountaineering. There is a thrilling air of history and mystery in the Alps too, made even more legendary through books and film.

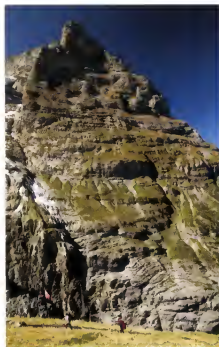
Many peaks are well known; the gargantuan bulk of the Alps' tallest peak, Mont Blanc (4807 metres), the classically perfect lines of the Matterhorn (4478 metres) and the massive north wall of the Eiger (3970 metres) – a famous challenge for climbers – are just a few. Other less renowned but equally captivating areas include the limestone spires of the Italian Dolomites and the Hohe Tauern National Park in Austria's Central Alps.

These summits also spawn some of the world's great glaciers. Europe's largest and longest, the Aletsch Glacier in Switzerland, is just one of hundreds that snake their way down the mountain-sides. These awesome rivers of ice also give rise to placid alpine lakes, roaring waterfalls and picturesque ice-carved valleys. High meadows and plateaus sit in mid-mountain elevations creating idyllic pastures alive with the jingling of cowbells in the warmer months, while drifts of wildflowers sway gently in the breezes during summer. Wildlife – such as marmots, chamois and the elusive ibex – are increasingly likely to be seen as native fauna are protected within national parks and reserves.

Fortunately for bushwalkers, the peoples that have lived in these mountains over the years created an excellent network of paths to gain access between villages or to mountain pastures, and these tracks are now maintained by the regular passage of outdoor enthusiasts.

Walking in the Alps makes use of this excellent path system, and the mostly well-signposted tracks cover all abilities and grades. Choose from simple hour-long strolls to challenging multi-day treks. Many places, particularly the major tourist villages and ski resorts, are readily accessible by public transport, putting you within just a short cable-car or cogwheel (rack-and-pinion) train ride from world-class walks. In fact, there are

so many scenic train journeys in the Alps – such as the Glacier Express from St Moritz to Zermatt in Switzerland – that it's worth linking a train trip to your desired walking area. There's something for everyone.



Hikers on the trail to Berghaus Bäregg, with the Eiger in the background. Opposite: San Maddalena church in the Val di Funes, with the peaks of the Parco Naturale Puez-Odle behind, Italian Dolomites. All photos by Glenn van der Knijff

### What to Expect

Walking in the Alps is certainly different. There are few places in the world where you can be surrounded by towering mountains, hemmed in among giant cliffs or perched above a groaning glacier. And yet, just around the corner, you'll stumble upon a mountain restaurant or *berghaus* serving scrumptious European fare, cold beer, and offering basic accommodation. Sound tempting?

While true wilderness probably doesn't exist, you can still search for – and find – solitude and serenity throughout the Alps, and perhaps even an isolated nook seemingly as 'wild' as any place on Earth.

Unlike walking in much of the Australian bush, where bushwalkers need to be self-sufficient, villages and hamlets are scattered throughout the Alps and resupplying food stocks is generally not a problem.

### Types of Walks

Popular tracks radiating from resort towns will usually be on excellent paths, wide and well-formed, but once you tackle longer multi-day walks in the more wild regions expect the tracks to be narrow and rocky, often with formed steps cut into the rock and even with guard-rails for support in the more perilous locations. On routes high in the mountains, tracks may be inconspicuous, marked by paint on rocks, and often very steep. If you do plan to venture into the more remote areas you'll need robust walking boots, though for short walks near towns a pair of trainers or sandals may well suffice.

On longer walks consider whether you'll be sleeping and dining in the mountain huts, as most walkers do on multi-day treks. If you plan to cater for your own meals, you may not be able to replenish your supplies until you pass through a town, possibly many days after starting out. Regardless of where you are in the Alps, you are normally no more than a day's walk – off-route – from a town or village.

### Money and Exchange Rates

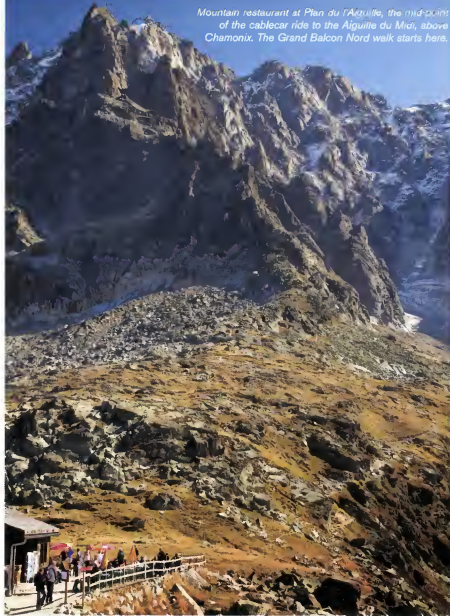
To get around the Alps you'll need euros (€) for all countries except Switzerland, where Swiss francs (CHF) are required. See [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) for current exchange rates.

### Accommodation in the Alps

In the resort towns you'll find a wide range of accommodation options, from hotels and rustic B&Bs to hostels and camping grounds. When you're in the hills and on the trails, however, the walkers' huts (*refuge* or *cabane* in French, *hütte* or *berghütte* in German, *rifugi* in Italian) are generally the only way to go. Bush camping is discouraged in most of the Alps except at the designated village campsites and, in some cases, adjacent to mountain huts.

Given the extensive hut system you can opt to leave your tent at home thus avoiding the need to toil under the weight of a bulging rucksack. These huts are seemingly everywhere, and you'll often pass one every few hours on the popular trails. Some are classic stone structures blending in harmoniously with the surrounding peaks, while others are modern, incongruous and not particularly aesthetic, though functionally they work well. Most huts have a sleeping area and a communal dining room, and include a (cold) shower and toilet area as well. During

Mountain restaurant at Plan du Tâcher, the mid-point of the cablecar ride to the Aiguille du Midi, above Chamonix. The Grand Balcon Nord walk starts here.



the summer months, from mid-June to mid-September, many huts are managed by a warden who can prepare dinner, lunch or breakfast for walkers; outside these times, many huts are locked or only allow access to a sleeping and dining area.

If staying at a warden hut you have a choice of paying for accommodation only, or you can pay to have dinner and/or breakfast included. Dinner meals are always nourishing and plentiful, though seldom exciting, and vegetarians are rarely catered for. Beds are usually in dormitory or bunk rooms and a mattress and blankets are provided, but you must bring your own sleeping bag or, at the very least, a bed sheet. (Personally, I'd advise bringing your own sleeping bag as bunk rooms can often be cold – especially in the higher regions – and the provided blankets may not be adequate on their own.) Full meals, lunches, snacks, soft drinks, and beer and wine are usually on offer – for day-trippers and overnight walkers alike.

Bed-only rates start at around €23/Chf28 per night but bed and dinner usually costs from €40/Chf50. Breakfast is available for around €12/Chf15, but it's often nothing

more than bread and jam with tea or coffee, so it's probably better to bring your own breakfast provisions. Most walkers provide their own breakfast and lunch, and rely on the huts for dinner and bed. Remember, too, that you'll need cash for payments at huts.

Other less significant huts have dormitory beds only, are fully self-catering and payment is by an honesty box system. Few huts have electricity, so you'll have trouble recharging mobile phones or other electrical gadgets.

In peak season, and on the extremely busy routes (such as the Tour du Mont Blanc and the Haute Route; see World-Class Walks, below), you should make advance bookings for your hut accommodation, but remember to advise the hut warden if you change your itinerary. At other times, bookings are not usually required. Most of the major regions of the Alps have websites which have hut listings and contact phone numbers. The local tourist offices within the mountains can offer advice (in English) too, and may even help you with bookings.

#### Overcoming the Language Barrier

Despite the range of languages in the Alps'

region, you can get by with English in many areas. A minimal grasp of the regional lingo is helpful, however, and will endear you with the locals. To learn the basics of each language, and to help you read all those confusing signs, a phrasebook can be most helpful; have a look at Lonely Planet's Western Europe Phrasebook (RRP \$15.95).

#### Food & Necessities

Allow a day or two prior to commencing your walk for purchasing food and other items. Mostly, you'll need to carry food for breakfast, lunch and snacks, given that you'll probably rely on huts for dinner as well as accommodation.

Good maps of the Alps are hard to come by in Australia, and you'll need to get these once you arrive in Europe. Tourist offices, outdoor stores and newsgents sell a selection of maps. Other items, such as stove fuel, clothing and equipment, can be obtained from outdoor stores in your arrival city or at other towns in the mountains.

#### Travelling to, and within, Europe

Zurich (Switzerland) is the most central of all the Alps' major cities and its international airport receives flights from Australia. I've flown into Zurich on many occasions, and I've always found it handy for accessing not just the Swiss Alps (from just two hours away) but also the northern portion of the French Alps and much of the Austrian and German Alps. Even the Italian Alps are not out of range from Zurich as the extensive rail network cuts right through the Alps...literally. Paris (France) has rail access to Chamonix and other points in the French Alps, sometimes using the super-fast TGV train. Milan (Italy) provides access to the Italian Alps and the peaks of Slovenia, while Munich (Germany) is close to the German and Austrian Alps. If you plan to visit the far eastern Alps, consider flying into Vienna (Austria) where you can easily access the mountains in eastern Austria and Slovenia.

Within Europe, the rail network is excellent and in Switzerland (in particular) it runs like clock-work. Train travel is an easy way to get around as the lines reach many far-flung mountain areas. If you plan to use a lot of standard trains and mountain railways, enquire at major stations about discount travel cards. For example, in Switzerland the Chf110 'One Month Half-Fare Card' offers 50 per cent off full-fare tickets, and tickets can be bought on your arrival in Switzerland: see [www.swisstravelsystem.com](http://www.swisstravelsystem.com). While the cost might sound expensive, it only takes a few long-distance train fares and a couple of rides on mountain railways to break even. Also, these reduced-fare cards offer discounts on selected cable-cars, ferries and other transport infrastructure.

If you can get hold of the Thomas Cook European Rail Timetable (published monthly), you'll have all of Europe's train schedules at your fingertips. You can order it from [www.thomascookpublishing.com](http://www.thomascookpublishing.com). General European rail fares and tickets (such as Eurail and Europasses), which also offer reduced fares with a variety of travel options, can be purchased in Australia. Further information can be gleaned from [www.railplus.com.au](http://www.railplus.com.au).

Each country within the Alps has its own rail authority, and each has a website that gives timetables and prices, but probably the best website belongs to Swiss Rail (SBB) – [www.sbb.ch/en/](http://www.sbb.ch/en/) – which provides a timetable for all of Europe.

To a lesser extent, buses also link to many mountain areas. Enquire at tourist offices, or on regional tourist websites, for bus routes and timetables.

## Health

Apart from general health and safety issues that you need to be aware of as a bushwalker (see Wild nos 58 and 102), there are a few other Alps-specific issues to be aware of.

**Altitude sickness.** Walking below about 2500 metres should not present walkers with any effects of altitude sickness. But if you are crossing areas approaching 3000 metres you may find that you experience a shortness of breath, a slight headache and/or lethargy. Possibly due to the exertion of the walk itself, it may also be that you are feeling the effects of altitude. If you do start to feel distressed, disoriented or suffer severe headache you should descend to a lower altitude as soon as

possible. Drinking plenty of water while walking at high altitude may help keep these symptoms at bay. For more on altitude sickness, see Wild no 29 or [www.altitude.org/altitude\\_sickness.htm](http://www.altitude.org/altitude_sickness.htm).

**Water.** In the mountains and away from towns and villages, most springs are fine for drinking but use your judgement wisely. Look at the walking maps and decide if the water is likely to be sourced from polluted areas, such as a settlement or grazed pasture, in which case treat the water with caution. Purifying water is advisable if you're unsure.

**Sunburn & Glare.** Even in Europe the sun is seriously strong in the mountains, especially at altitude. Pack plenty of sunscreen and lip-balm. If you are walking in high areas where snow may lie, sunglasses are essential to cut glare and prevent eye damage.

**Emergencies.** Dialling 112 throughout the Alps will get you in touch with the local emergency or rescue group. Rescue is seriously expensive, so make sure you take out travel insurance.

## When to Visit

The warmer months are the best times to walk in the Alps. During winter and the adjacent shoulder periods most huts are unstaffed and many are locked. Some huts have an area that's open to walkers year round, but you'd have to be fully self-sufficient and, due to much of the Alps being heavily snow-bound between November and April, walking and trail-finding could become problematic.

There are extraordinary altitude variations

in the Alps and this, in effect, creates a number of micro-climates. In the valleys, at around 500 metres elevation, summers can be hot and humid, and lowland walking can be uncomfortable. The mid-altitude range, between 1000 metres and 2500 metres, is where most of your walking is likely to occur and walking in summer is pleasant. Above 2500 metres, you may encounter lingering snow, particularly early in summer, and above 3000 metres many passes may be snowbound year-round. Like most mountainous regions, conditions can turn fickle at any time and you must be prepared for cold and inclement weather, particularly at higher elevations. Snow is not uncommon in summer; in 1996 I saw over 30 centimetres of snow fall at Kleine Scheidegg (2061 metres) in June!

The greatest chance to score settled weather is between mid-August and mid-September, though in August you'll have the company of hordes of other walkers in popular areas. If you plan to walk during the height of the busy summer period (July and August) you may wish to pre-book your hut accommodation (see Accommodation in the Alps, above). Another possibility is to take a tent during this busy time and camp adjacent to the huts, but it's well worth calling ahead to check whether camping is permitted. Otherwise, you could base your walk around overnighting in towns, certainly a feasible option in some areas.

## Special Equipment

Apart from your normal bushwalking kit you don't need any special equipment, unless your

Train at Grindelwald, with the peak called the Wetterhorn in the background. This mountain railway provides easy access to many great tracks in the vicinity of the Eiger.







*The peaks of Tre Cime de Lavaredo, seen from the Valle di Landro in the Parco Naturale Dolomiti di Sesto.*

itinerary involves walking across large areas of snow or glaciers where it would be advisable to carry instep crampons. These can usually be hired from the outdoor-gear stores in the major access towns and tourist villages.

Mobile phones are a handy safety tool but you'll need to contact your network provider in Australia to make sure you're phone can be used overseas. Calls can be excessively expensive, but SMSing is usually affordable; buying a local SIM card may also reduce the cost of calls. Many huts, however, don't have electricity so phones can't be recharged. Reception can also be poor in mountainous areas. This goes without saying, but be prepared for all types of conditions in the Alps; mountain weather here is notoriously erratic, and you should always carry warm clothing, waterproof outer-wear and sturdy walking boots.

### Walk Suggestions

So, where to start? Apart from a few short walks, my first real walking experiences in the Alps were in the Zermatt region of Switzerland and in the towering peaks above Chamonix, France. These areas were chosen because I had limited time, I wanted to see spectacular mountains as well as the highest peaks in the Alps, and I wanted to visit areas that were accessible by train. I made my way from Zurich to Chur, in eastern Switzerland. Here I boarded the infamous Glacier Express train as it passed through town. This classic mountain journey (see [www.glacierexpress.ch](http://www.glacierexpress.ch)) trundles through southern Switzerland to Zermatt, an attractively sited village at the base of what is surely one of the most perfect

mountains in the world, the Matterhorn.

Hidden gallingly from view until you arrive in Zermatt, at first sight the Matterhorn is worthy of all superlatives and, no matter how many times you've seen this beautiful mountain, it still takes your breath away.

Zermatt makes for a splendid base, and there's a plethora of day and overnight walks on offer. Day walkers should try the Höhhalmen trail, the maze of routes in the Sunnegga and Gornergrat areas or, for something a little more exciting, the lower Hörnligrat ridge of the Matterhorn. If you're after more of a challenge, try the ten-day Tour of the Matterhorn, a 145-kilometre walk circumnavigating this 4500-metre monolith. After five days I headed for Chamonix, which is accessible from Zermatt via rail connections in Visp and Martigny. Chamonix is a great centre for walks. Start with rewarding walks on the Grand Balcon Nord (below the rocky spires of the Chamonix Aiguilles and Aiguilles du Midi) as well as sections of the Tour du Mont Blanc, and Lac Blanc, on the Grand Balcon Sud (where the views of Mont Blanc and the Glacier des Bossons are simply humbling). To embark on the entire Tour du Mont Blanc, which takes you into Italy and Switzerland, you'll need to set aside about 11-12 days. Zermatt and Chamonix are still among my favourite Alps' destinations.

Other areas that I recall with fond memories, and I highly recommend, include the alluring limestone spires of Sasso Lungo and Odle Gruppe in the Italian Dolomites, the trails below the majestic mile-high walls of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau in Switzerland

(using Grindelwald as a base), and the lush meadows and peaks near Salzburg where I had my first taste of Alps walking.

### World-Class Walks

**Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB).** This 11-12 day walk begins in France and circumnavigates the Alps' tallest peak, Mont Blanc. This challenging tour takes walkers through stunning alpine scenery in three countries; France, Italy and Switzerland. In fact, Mont Blanc itself actually sits astride the France/Italy frontier, and is never far from view throughout the journey.

**Walkers' Haute Route.** The original Haute Route (High Trail) from Chamonix (France) to Zermatt (Switzerland) is a tough ski-mountaineering crossing over glaciers and high snow-bound passes. The alternative – known as the Walkers' Haute Route – is a demanding 14-day journey that avoids the technical sections but still involves a spectacular traverse of the Pennine Alps between Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn.

**Via Alpina.** If you're up to it, try this ultimate challenge. Opened as recently as 2005, the Via Alpina ([www.via-alpina.org](http://www.via-alpina.org)) is a trans-Alps trail, marked and signed for its entire length. Starting at Trieste, on Italy's Adriatic coast, it wends its way through 342 daily stages to arrive in Monaco on the Mediterranean Sea, some 5000 kilometres later. **W**

**Want more?** For links to hut information and walking areas, see [wild.com.au/feature/article/walking-in-the-alps](http://wild.com.au/feature/article/walking-in-the-alps)

# Pesto

*Andrew Davison* takes this simple Italian paste and gives it an outdoor flavour

When the Italians first created pesto they must have been thinking about heading into a remote area of the Alps for a week with only a pack on their back.

The potent combination of herbs, nuts and cheese, blended into a lasting paste of pungent flavours is ideal for bushwalking. A few spoons mixed through cooked pasta and there's a five minute meal; a dollop on a cracker with a piece of feta and sun dried tomato and there's lunch; mixed with couscous and a variety of antipasto ingredients creates a light summer meal. A

spoonful added to cabbage and rehydrated mushrooms sautéed in a spoon of butter and you have created a delicious nameless dish. A spoonful stirred through a soup can add a fresh zing, or added to salad dressing and tossed through fresh ingredients on a summer's weekend stroll can give a flavour burst.

The variety of ingredients to create different pestos means the pasta you made last night with basil and pine nut pesto can be completely different with tonight's parsley and preserved lemon pesto.

There is a limited variety of pestos in

the supermarkets and to be honest, most are really not that good. It is possible to find a variety of different pestos in selected delicatessens but it is very easy to make your own. Here are few of my favourite recipes to make at home and take on your next walk. It is a good idea to have a few plastic watertight containers on hand so you can freeze excess pesto ready for the next trip.

For all pestos I recommend using the freshest ingredients you can find. This gives you a potent, rich and full-flavoured pesto.



Tapenade on crackers with feta. Photo: Andrew Davison

## SPINACH AND PARSLEY PESTO

- 1 cup spinach, firmly packed
- 1 cup parsley, firmly packed
- ½ cup blanched almonds
- 2 cloves garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Place the spinach, parsley, almonds and garlic in a food processor or blender. Start blending the ingredients whilst slowly adding the oil. Once all ingredients are pureed and the mix resembles a paste remove and place into a bowl and mix through the cheese.

## PARSLEY AND PRESERVED LEMON PESTO

- 1 preserved lemon
- 1 ½ cup parsley, firmly packed
- ½ cup walnuts
- 2 garlic cloves
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Remove the pulp from the preserved lemon and discard. Place the lemon peel, parsley, walnuts and garlic in a food processor or blender. Start blending the ingredients while slowly adding the oil. Once all ingredients are pureed and the mix resembles a paste remove and place into a bowl and mix through the cheese.

## TAPENADE

Like pesto, tapenade is a flavourful paste and can be used in much the same way. However, the main ingredient usually consists of olives.

- 1 ½ cups green pitted olives
- 5 anchovies
- 1 dessert spoon capers
- 2 garlic cloves
- ½ cup olive oil

Place the olives, anchovies, capers and garlic in a food processor or blender. Start blending the ingredients whilst slowly adding the oil until all ingredients are pureed and the mix resembles a paste.



# COMING TO A GARDEN NEAR YOU

There's more to the audacious scrub turkey than its relentless scratching, writes *Steve Van Dyck*

There is an old proverb that says 'those who suggest humane solutions to the urban management of scrub turkeys are those whose surface has never been scratched'.

What the proverb is trying to evoke is an appreciation for a measure of ornithological gall that, in the scrub turkey (*Alcedo lathami*), bubbles over to eclipse even the effrontery of dinnertime telemarketers selling Gold Coast time-share holidays from Mumbai.

But it's a hard call interpreting the behaviour of this bird. Is the scrub turkey just primarily hard-wired for vacuum-headed scratching in the dumbest-dogged sense of the words, or is it accidentally programmed to slowly strum, in the head of *Homo sapiens*, that brittle nerve that reminds us that we humans are supposed to hold supremacy over all lower forms of life.

I suspect that in most turkey-challenged gardeners, the hair-tearing frustration with these birds results simply from repression of the killer instinct given the bird's legal status. It gets away with doing what it is programmed to do because, at the end of the day, people cannot take the simplest of all measures and make the coup de grâce with potatoes and gravy. And even if you concede only two sparking neurones between a scrub turkey's ears, we all know the second is dedicated to reminding him he's protected by law (while he scratches under the influence of the first).

What follows in the wake of this protection is a litany of human intervention the likes of which are not usually seen outside jungle warfare. The difference is that in browsing through just about any web-based message board on gardening problems involving turkeys, it is almost impossible to stifle a smile.

A turkey's threshold for boredom when faced with most run-of-the-mill



discouragement techniques cannot be detected even on Olympic stopwatches before the bird resumes scratching. Under 'basic dissuasion' we could list yelling and screaming, arm waving, chasing, hosing, stick throwing, scarecrows, model hawks, flapping flags, fences, strategically placed rocks or garden furniture, rubber snakes and plastic cats with marble eyes. Intelligent dogs get sick of chasing them up into trees, and flashing lights run the risk of inducing seizures in neighbours. In one instance even a 'four-foot high metal cassowary' failed to gain the turkey's respect.

Breathing space between assaults has been achieved with strong criss-crossed fishing lines and wooden stakes driven into the ground pointy ends up, so rather than a glade close to God, your backyard can resemble a World War I beach landing site in Normandy. Even mirrors don't hold their attention for long and inspire additional distress with the prospect of a pecking male

smashing the mirror to pieces and then kicking the shards throughout the backyard.

Following someone's advice to pre-empt the bird's activities by first covering the backyard with a layer of cyclone mesh then adding mulch over it, a distraught writer told of how a turkey scratched its way across and through the netting until its feet bled while it tore up the electrical wiring to their swimming pool. It was caught and translocated, the neighbours were abusive over the incident, and another turkey appeared on the scene the next day.

While specific areas like vegetable gardens can be protected within a cage of soft inexpensive bird-proof netting, more lasting success with larger landscapes is achieved by opening the garden's canopy up to a Nullarbor Plain sun, replacing vegetation with gravel or concrete, joining support groups, undergoing therapy or applying Kings Bush Turkey Solution to the infected spots.

Almost everyone knows that by spring, male turkeys obsess over raking mulch into a monstrous composting incubator into which many hens will lay their eggs. This may include your recently delivered \$800 truckload of pine bark, but not necessarily your permission to move it three doors down. Some western Brisbane suburban roads are regularly crossed by thick, crunching streams of brown debris as industrious males dodge cars to scratch mulch from gardens and kick it across the bitumen to their nest on the other side. On my place, I've watched gobsmacked as a determined male created a bridge across a wide, slowly running creek by doggedly pushing a wave of mulch farther and farther out, until a dry trail was constructed and the opposing banks united for business.

But while males are building, females are hunting for protein to fuel those 16 to 24 white grenades each hen may lay in various mounds during a season. So often it is she that rips your new plants out of their pots or destroys your vegetable garden looking for 'fruit', worms and other invertebrates. A chicken is only as good as what goes into its egg.

The astonishing thing about these eggs is that temperatures slightly above 34°C result in more females; with temperatures lower than that hatching more males. It's not sex change according to heat (as in some [other!] reptiles), but embryo mortality; the

developing females are killed by low temperatures, males by high. So not only is the right hatching temperature of the mound adjusted and maintained by the male using his heat-sensitive beak, but on a finer scale he is probably instrumental in determining the sex ratio of chicks that will dig out of the nest.

However, one experience with a scrub turkey egg makes me uneasy about all this. Around 30 years ago, the Ornithology Section of the Queensland Museum was on a mezzanine level above the original sprung dance floor of the extraordinarily domed, arched and towered 'Victorian Revival'-style Exhibition Building (now known as the Old Museum) in Bowen Hills. Good for dancing and concerts, to which it has now reverted, it was substandard as both an art gallery and a museum.

In summer, afternoon storms would dump hail into the gutters and backed-up water would percolate between precious paintings and the walls on which they were displayed. Flying termites would erupt from undetected nests in the basement to fill curatorial offices, and rats constructed nests out of specimen labels stolen from open boxes containing fossils. Made of polychromatic brick work, it was freezing in winter and still cold in spring, the season when someone donated a scrub turkey egg. The egg came in a box lined with cotton wool and, not really

constituting a significant addition to the collection, it was left in the closed box on the ornithology assistant's table to be prepared (blown) later.

Weeks after, the assistant's curiosity was aroused by curious scratching sounds coming from the surface of her table. On tracking the scuffling to the forgotten box, she noticed it was juddering and, gingerly opening the lid, saw a baby turkey peering up from its hatched egg! No mulch, no humidity, no quality control, no turning. I know this is true because I took the chick home that very day and treated it (inappropriately) like a newly hatched fowl until, opening the cage door a few days later it happily flew out and off into the sky like an ungrateful quail.

Cute as the chicks might be, before you book yourself into an asylum on account of your failing relationship with adult urban turkeys, please take heart from the last words of advice issued by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage on the subject: 'Brush turkeys are part of Australia's natural heritage, and many householders now accept these birds as a fascinating part of their backyard environment'. Fascinating indeed, just like the study of kinesthetic astronomy and the measurement of angular momentum!

*Dr Steve Van Dyck is the Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the Queensland Museum.*

Scrub turkeys in action. Photos: Frank Harrison





# Green Gully Track

If you're after an established multi-day walk without the crowds, the Green Gully circuit in northern New South Wales may be for you. *Dave Caldwell* shows us around

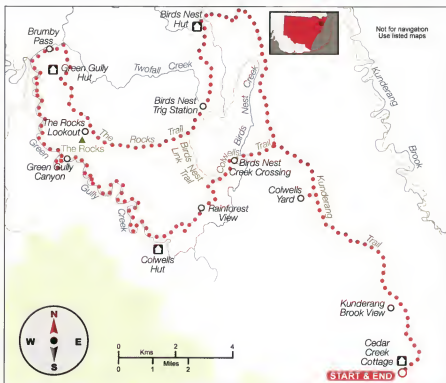
There are few pastoral properties in Australia with a more imposing topography than the Apsley Macleay Gorges. With its jagged ravines, tumbling rivers and waterfalls, the stockmen who mustered cattle in this terrain were a tough breed. Some were chased by wild bulls with horns more than 50 inches in diameter; others were thrown off their horses and trampled. Despite broken ribs and copious bruises, the stockmen had an affinity with what is today the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, an area which straddles much of the Great Dividing Range escarpment to the southeast of Armidale in New South Wales.

Situated in the southeast corner of the park is the Green Gully Track. This four-day circuit follows in the stockholders' hoof prints. It winds through a former beef cattle mustering property that began operation in 1957 when stockman Laurie O'Keefe purchased a number of Crown Lease blocks. Along with his son Jeff, Laurie painstakingly eked out three access roads into the property

with bulldozers; direct vehicular access from one side of the property to the other is still not possible even today, although there are now a number of tracks that head down into the gorges. During their tenure, the O'Keefes also erected three mustering huts. These were simple structures made of earthen floors, milled timber frames and lightweight corrugated metal cladding for protection against bushfires. The huts have since been restored and walkers stay in them as they venture around the circuit. The Yarowitch River bisects Green Gully down the middle; the Apsley River forms part of its northwest boundary. Old growth forest survives here as the area hasn't been subject to ringbarking for at least 50 years. The Green Gully locale is also home to a variety of threatened and endangered species including brush-tailed rock-wallabies, which are ubiquitous in Green Gully yet sparse elsewhere in Australia. The population spike is probably due to the wild dog eradication program implemented by Laurie and Jeff

O'Keefe to protect their cattle. In 1971 Jeff clasped the Green Gully reins when his father died. He managed the 14 120-hectare property until 2002 when he sold it to National Parks for \$1.3 million. Green Gully's reservation as part of Oxley Wild Rivers National Park was formally gazetted in April 2005. The track opened in April 2011 with 360 people walking along it during its first year, a figure that well exceeded ranger and track creator Piers Thomas's expectations.

'Originally, we planned for 120 people to come through in the first year,' he said. 'We already have more than 200 hikers booked in for this year as well – the upcoming school holidays have been booked out for months.' More than 75 per cent of Green Gully visitors are people that have travelled from more than 500 kilometres away. The Green Gully Track recently won an award in the New Tourism Development category at the CountryLink Inland Tourism Awards in NSW. Anybody who traverses this circuit will not struggle to see why.



## ACCESS

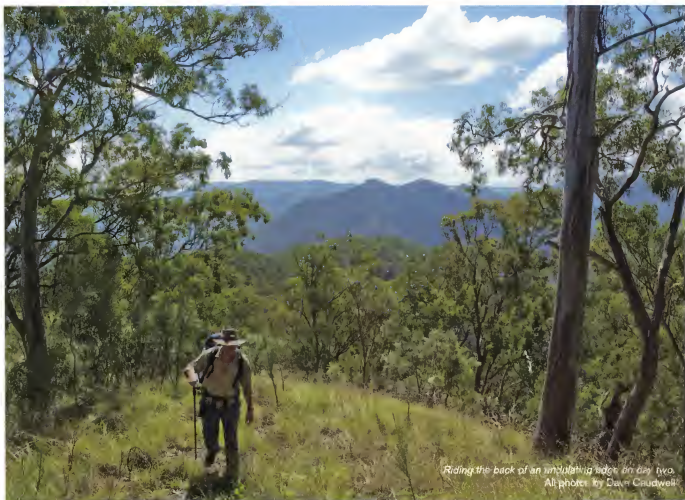
The track starts at Cedar Creek Cottage, about two hours' drive from Walcha, or two and a half hours from Port Macquarie. Turning off the Oxley Highway, the last part of the journey to Cedar Creek Cottage winds for 30 kilometres along a gravel access road, which is accessible for two-wheel-drive cars. As the walk begins and ends at Cedar Creek Cottage, you can park your car there behind a locked gate.

## WHEN TO GO

Spring and autumn are the best times to walk. The area often dips below freezing in winter and summers can get excruciatingly hot.

## SAFETY/WARNINGS

Most of the third day is spent wading through Green Gully Creek, the water level of which can rise to chest height after heavy downpours. The El Niño weather cycle has caused varied fluctuations in creek levels during the last couple of years. Check a long-



*Riding the back of an undulating ridge on day two.  
All photos by Dawn Chadwell*

term forecast before heading out. There is a weather station at Cedar Creek, which will send an alarm out if there's more than 40 millilitres of rain in a day. The alarm sends a text message to Piers Thomas and other National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) workers who will arrange an emergency helicopter to evacuate walkers if necessary. So far this is yet to happen.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Take a spare pair of shoes – preferably Volleys – in which to wade through the creek on day three. NPWS has set up the walk so that only one group goes through at a time. This means you'll have the huts to yourself and won't run into anybody else on the track. For general information about the circuit and how to book, check out [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/Western/Oxley\\_Wild\\_Rivers\\_NP/GreenGullyTrackFAQ.pdf](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/Western/Oxley_Wild_Rivers_NP/GreenGullyTrackFAQ.pdf)

#### THE WALK

##### DAY ONE

##### Cedar Creek Cottage to Birds Nest Hut; 17.4 kilometres

From Cedar Creek Cottage, it's not long until you're immersed in a forest of tall gum trees and are walking along a ridge that separates Kunderang Brook and Green Gully Creek. There are some great views through the trees into Kunderang Brook Valley – especially in the morning when mist lingers. The Valley has a fairly brutal history which started when European pastoralists seized Aboriginal land back in the 1840s. In retaliation, angry indigenous tribesmen stole and speared cattle and, on occasion, killed settlers. The pastoralists also had blood on their hands and a bitter feud ensued for more than two decades.

The track continues along a 4WD management track with some short, steep climbs and descents. Eight kilometres into the walk, you'll reach a turn-off for Colwells Yard. An 800-metre detour (return) takes you to a now defunct and overgrown stockyard.

The route continues along the Kunderang

Trail and reaches a fence; this is where the Green Gully Station starts proper. The land you've been walking on up to now previously belonged to former stockman Alan Youldale. Just past the fence there is a left-hand path that leads to Colwells Hut; this is where you'll stay on the third night. Ignore this turn-off (as you'll be walking back up it on day four) and continue through the forest. A mossy gate indicates the entrance to Birds Nest Hut. Walk down a small access road at the bottom of which you'll find a cosy hut nestled beside Birds Nest Creek. Inside each of the restored huts you'll find a gas stove, six stretcher beds with mattresses, crockery, cutlery and camping chairs.

##### DAY TWO

##### Birds Nest Hut to Green Gully Hut; 15 kilometres

Leaving Birds Nest Hut, you'll pass an old stockyard. From here the track climbs a gentle ridge to Birds Nest Trig, a weather station 1200 metres above sea level. Sometimes the path may appear indistinct,



Wading through Green Gully Creek.

**This section of the track cuts deep into the gorge system. Sheer rock faces raise either side of you; this is where the sense of isolation is at its most palpable.**

but there are two signs to point you in the right direction. This is the highest part of the track, although there isn't a 360° panorama, just occasional glimpses of the surrounding countryside through the foliage.

Descend gradually, looking out for views of rolling hills to your right. There is a good spot for lunch at the Rocks Lookout, from which there are fine views over Green Gully Creek and the Apsley River Gorge 500 metres below.

After lunch, the path veers steeply down a tussock-clad spur, which passes gigantic

grass trees – some of which are more than three metres tall. You'll have descended 900 metres by the time you reach Green Gully Creek where the track flattens out. There are a few creek crossings here – some well-timed leaps but nothing major. The creek leads you into a mini canyon and onto Brumby Pass. This part of the track is the ideal habitat for endangered brush-tailed rock-wallabies, and if you keep a lookout you may see some spying on you from their lofty perches. At the end of the pass you'll walk through a flood fence

on the other side of which, after a short walk, you'll come to Green Gully Hut. The outstanding feature here is an outside shower with hot water. Having a hot shower beneath a starry canopy is a great way to end any day.

### DAY THREE

**Green Gully Hut to Colwells Hut; 13.5 kilometres**

After a four-kilometre walk along an overgrown management trail, the path ends abruptly and much of the remainder of the day is spent wading through Green Gully Creek. It's a case of choosing your own adventure. Sometimes it may be easier to scramble up onto the bank and clamber through the undergrowth. Volleys and long trousers are advisable; the rubber soles of the Volleys will help grip slippery creek rocks, and long trousers will minimise the cuts from walking through brambles and stinging nettles on the bank. This section of the track cuts deep into the gorge system. Sheer rock faces raise either side of you; this is where the sense of isolation is at its most palpable. This is the deepest part of the creek where the water should typically be up to your thighs. Again look out for brush-tailed rock-wallabies, although don't take your attention too much off the river as the currents are deceptively strong in some places. You could fall over. Around halfway into the wade, you'll come to a waterhole that is a great place for lunch. A brief boulder hop takes you onto a rocky outcrop before it's time to re-enter the creek and wade through a shallower section. After three kilometres you'll come out of the creek and walk along an overgrown management track flanked with tall trees embraced by lichen. Four kilometres along this track is Colwells Hut, the most basic hut on the circuit.

### DAY FOUR

**Colwells Hut to Cedar Creek Cottage; 17.5 kilometres**

Load up on the energy bars as the first three kilometres of day four's walk gains 600 metres. The track follows a very steep management trail which winds up the hill and overlooks pockets of dry rainforest, areas of vegetation that are protected from extreme heat on south- and east-facing slopes. After re-joining the Kunderang Trail, it's a case of retracing your steps back to Cedar Creek Cottage, where a hot shower and a comfortable bed awaits if you've booked in for a fifth night.

### THE WALK AT A GLANCE

**Distance:** 63.4 kilometres

**Time:** 4 days

**Grade:** Medium

**Start/finish:** Cedar Creek Cottage

**Access:** Turn off Oxley Highway, up a 30-kilometre gravel road

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# Bushwalking meals

## We sink our teeth into 13 dishes designed for the outdoors

One aspect I really like about big walks – and life, in general – is planning what I'm going to eat. I think most people would agree: Hot food, in the middle of nowhere, after a tiring day of slogging through the wilderness is the best meal I've ever had – and now we can choose to have a huge selection of pre-packaged meals, or have the means to make our own.

There are a couple of things to keep in mind when taking food on a multiday trip. Food should be preserved to last the distance. With few exceptions, bacteria need water to proliferate so by removing moisture, microbial activity is limited. Given water forms a large component of our food – strawberries has about 92 per cent and lean raw minced beef has 50 to 65 per cent water – removing it also makes the resulting product very lightweight. There are two main commercial ways of doing this: dehydration and freeze-drying.

### Dehydrated food

Water in food is evaporated from its liquid state to gas by laying it out on trays or

mesh and blowing warm air over it. As big chunks of meat and vegetables need a long time to completely dehydrate (and rehydrate) most commercially dehydrated meals have finely chopped ingredients. The outer layer of a piece of food in a dehydrator dries faster than the centre, so the bits shrink and collapse (think about how a dried apricot compares to a fresh one). Unless you prefer little crunchy bits with each mouthful, you need to make sure you wait long enough for water to soak through dried food before hoeing in.

### Freeze-dried food

Like dehydration, freeze-drying removes moisture but instead of converting water to gas, it freezes the food and sublimates the ice crystals directly to gas. Sublimation is a process where, under certain pressure, a substance changes state from solid to gas without having a liquid phase. (The opposite effect is called deposition. A common example of deposition is the formation of frost from water vapour.) Trays of food are placed in a pressure- and

temperature-controlled chamber. Under very low temperature and pressure, the water freezes and sublimates, and unlike dehydration, the food retains its shape. The little tunnels formed during the sublimation process are handy when rehydrating the meal, as boiling water exploits these holes and soaks in faster.

Rice or pasta, which has been cooked then dehydrated or freeze-dried, rehydrates faster than it takes to cook the raw product. This is helpful if you wish to conserve gas. But removing moisture isn't the be all and end all of bushwalking food.

### Cooked in a bag

Meals are sealed in bags and cooked at high temperatures, killing all bacteria and preserving the food in its wet state. No rehydration required; just reheat and eat. Everything's retained, including water, which means these meals are a little heavier than dehydrated or freeze-dried ones, but if you're traversing countryside where clean water is scarce, these are a great option.

## Meet the testing panel

### Aaron Flanagan

Editor: *Outer Edge* and *Rock*  
Aaron has eaten lots of bush food – magpie goose, long-necked turtle, Torres Strait pigeon – but is looking for something a little less murderous.

### Christine Grimard

Editor: *BeanScene* and *Global Coffee Review*  
Originally from Quebec, Christine's culinary background includes poutines and beaver tails (the pastry kind, not the barbaric kind).

### Gayle Shapcott

Business Development Manager: *Wild*, *Outer Edge* and *Rock*  
Gayle likes her food hot and spicy and preferably cooked by someone else – with a glass of wine, of course.

### Gordon Watson

Subscriptions Officer  
Gordon hails from the country that invented haggis. Enough said.

### Joel Parke

Art Director  
Accustomed to eating home-cooked meals seven nights a week, Joel very much looks forward to testing different methods of cooking.

### Justin Orbien

Journalist: *Trailer* and *Global Trailer*  
As long as the food's not laced with chilli, liver, unhatched baby chickens or olives, Justin will bite.

### Luke Killingly

Designer and Production Manager  
While Luke has sampled local insect delicacies in South East Asia, he wouldn't dare try anything like that in the Australian wilderness.

### Sebastian Grote

Managing Editor: *Trailer*, *Global Trailer*, *Prime Mover* and *CRT News*  
Sebastian was raised on a diet largely comprising sauerkraut, beer, and pork products.

All meals are photographed in identical bowls to give you an idea of the size of each dish.

## BACK COUNTRY CUISINE

[seatosummit.com.au](http://seatosummit.com.au)

Back Country Cuisine freeze-dried meals come in a plethora of varieties and sizes, from single-serve nasi goreng to five-serve roast lamb and vegetables. To minimise packaging waste, all their meals are prepared in the packet by opening the top of the pouch, pouring in water as per the directions, stirring, resealing using the zip lock and letting it stand for the amount of time on the packet. A bowl can be created by tearing a lower perforation, so all you need is a spork. Also available: flameless heater pack (\$6.50) so even if you don't have a stove, you can have a meal; and Thermo Pouch (\$16.95) to keep your meal hot.

## CHEFSWAY

rucsacsupplies.com.au

Australian-made Chefsway meals are hearty, filling portions of eight classic offerings such as spag bol and Irish beef and stout stew. These dehydrated meals come in single and double serves and require stove-top simmering. They have vegetarian and gluten-free options and while they took more cooking time compared to other meals, they were large and bulky, perfect for the hungry walker.



## SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE \$17.95

Serves: 2

We were pretty surprised at how big this meal was – and chock full of carbs and protein.

**Justin says:** Superb. Better than any packaged spags at the supermarket. The spaghetti is cut up so it is easy to eat.

**Luke says:** Strong Bolognese flavour. Great carb intake after a day of exercise.

**Christine says:** I'd happily eat this at a dinner party and not complain afterwards.

## BEEF STROGANOFF \$9.95

Serves: 1

An old favourite, beef strog is a Russian dish of pieces of beef cooked in sauce, usually with sour cream (or similar). This one comes with rice.

**Gayle says:** Great meaty flavour. Rice is nice too.

**Joel says:** Tasty and very eatable. It would be nice if the meat pieces were bigger but that would mean a longer meal prep time.

**Justin says:** It's salty but has a nice taste to it. I'd definitely eat this after a day of walking.



## THREE FRUITS CHEESECAKE

\$11.95

Serves: 2

The only dessert we tried, it looked pretty, well, interesting when poured in a bowl.

**Christine says:** Even though it's mushy and looks kind of bad, it tastes fine. It's quite sweet, but after a day of walking would be great.

**Gayle says:** Looks pretty bad but tastes surprisingly good.

**Aaron says:** Tasty with nice biscuit pieces. Would be good in a pastry case.



## ROAST CHICKEN \$9.95

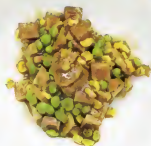
Serves: 1

Who doesn't like roast chicken? This meal for one comes with vegetables and gravy.

**Gordon says:** I'm really enjoying this. Not bad at all.

**Luke says:** The veggies are nice and juicy and taste really good.

**Sebastian says:** It is a bit strange eating roast chicken that's been cut up into perfect squares. Tastes OK though.



## HAPPY CAMPER GOURMET

happycampergourmet.com.au

If you like lamb shanks, you'll love Happy Camper Gourmet. Now you can take slow-cooked lamb shanks, veal shanks, beef stew or any of their seven varieties out with you and not have to worry about reconstituting the meat. Happy Camper Gourmet meals are cooked in the bag, so although they're heavy compared to the dehydrated or freeze-dried food, all you need to do is heat up the contents and voilà! Luscious chunks of tender meat and vegetables are all yours. These are best served with rice, pasta or damper to satisfy hungry hikers.

## MEATBALLS \$9.95

Serves: 1

Six meatballs in tomato sauce, loaded up with herbs, work really well with mashed potato (not included).

**Joel says:** Nice home-cooked flavour. I could eat a whole meal of these.

**Sebastian says:** Tastes better than I expected. The meat is nice and soft and tasty. It's a simple meal but good.

**Aaron says:** Quite close to how you'd expect homemade balls o' meat. Nice sauce, full of tomatoey goodness.



## CATTLEMEN'S STEW \$10.95

Serves: 1

Slow-cooked meat and vegetables result in a drool-worthy stew.

**Aaron says:** Appetising morsels. Beef is soft and pliant. Very nice flavour.

**Luke says:** It tastes like a homemade slow-cooked version.

**Christine says:** Just like my husband's homemade stew. I'd eat this at home!



## THE OUTDOOR GOURMET COMPANY

outdoorgourmetcompany.com.au

Outdoor gourmet indeed. These freeze-dried meals are perfect for those who want a restaurant menu in the middle of nowhere. With options such as venison casarecce with white wine sauce, beef bourguignon, and coq au vin, you can experience fine dining at its most wild. Meals are prepared in the bag, much the same as Back Country Cuisine, so all you need to wash up is a spork. Serving sizes come in single and double serves, although not all options are available as single serves. The Outdoor Gourmet Company describes a single serve as 'an ideal appetiser for two or a tasty light meal for one' and a double serve as 'an ideal main course for two to share after enjoying an entree or great for a solo adventurer with a big appetite'.

## COQ AU VIN \$16.95

Serves: 2

Chicken and wine with a sachet of dried mashed potato to rehydrate separately.

**Sebastian says:** Looks a bit strange but you can really taste the wine.

**Gayle says:** Lots of flavour. The texture of the mash is good and the wine flavour, nice.

**Aaron says:** An ambitious dish, but pulled off, I think. Good spuds, pleasant mouth feel, subtle wine flavours.



## TANDOORI CHICKEN \$16.95

Serves: 2

Bright red tandoori flavours with chunks of chicken, soft rice, and yoghurt to rehydrate.

**Gayle says:** Could do with some more spice, but has really solid strong flavours.

**Sebastian says:** It's pretty good – a little bit sweet, but the yoghurt was a nice touch.

**Joel says:** The colour is a bit off-putting, but it tastes fine. The chicken pieces are really good.



**MILD THAI CURRY \$6.90**

Serves: 3

This mildly spiced minced meat is quite flavoursome, and by all accounts, ideal with rice.

*Gordon says:* Salty but tasty. I think it would be better with rice.

*Christine says:* The spices give the meat a nice flavour. Texture is more like falafel than mince meat though.

*Aaron says:* A little salty but dense and packed with protein. Would be much better with rice.

**BEEF AND BLACK BEAN \$6.90**

Serves: 3

It's a bit different to the standard beef and black bean you might find at your local Chinese restaurant, but still tasty.

*Christine says:* Tastes like taco meat. It's fine, but would be best served with other food.

*Gayle says:* We just need to add some noodles or rice. I really like its versatility.

*Joel says:* Tastes good, but doesn't remind me of normal beef and black bean.

**CREAMY VEGETABLE PASTA \$14.50**

Serves: 2

Shell pasta and a host of vegetables make a big bowl of creamy carbohydrate-loaded goodness.

*Aaron says:* You can't go wrong with pasta. The sauce is like a thick vegetable soup and, all up, resembled a normal meal.

*Sebastian says:* This is surprisingly tasty, if a little salty. The pasta is al dente and the vegetables are tender.

*Joel says:* Lovely flavour and it's not too overpowering. Great!

**VEGETABLE LAKSA \$14.50**

Serves: 2

This meal has loads of egg noodles and vegetables in a rich, coconut-based curry soup.

*Luke says:* This has a strong laksa flavour and loads of sauce and noodles. It's a big meal.

*Joel says:* It has a nice amount of spice and great texture. The soup is thick but not gluggy.

*Sebastian says:* It tastes pretty good. The vegetables are soft and juicy.

**SETTLERS FOOD PRODUCTS**  
settlersfoods.com.au

A handy companion to camping mealtimes, Settlers Food Products' dried beef mince – which comes in eight flavours – is a lightweight way to boost your protein intake. With no artificial preservatives or additives, and being 97 per cent fat free, each 125 gram satchel serves two or three people. Just add boiling water to the packet, stir, and wait. Best served with rice or noodles, you can also order mixed vegetables (\$18.50 for one kilogram) to add to your meal. Meat packets also come in one-kilogram (\$36.50) or five-kilogram (\$162.50) sizes, and the mirrored surfaces can be used in emergency situations, should you be unlucky enough to get stuck.

**STRIVE FOOD**  
strivefood.com.au

Tasmania-based Strive Food (with a physical address in Sandy Bay) is one of the few companies that shows what the dehydrated product looks like. I like this; I can see exactly what's in the meal, if I need to add more of something or take it out, and get a rough idea of how much food the packet will make. All meals are vacuum-packed in water-resistant plastic and come in single or double serves. You can choose from nine main meals as well as three breakfasts, two desserts, meal add-ons (such as meat or vegetables), and snack and ration packs. Meals are cooked on a stove for around 15 minutes and pack a fair calorific punch.



BRAND	PRODUCT	SERVES	DEHYDRATED/ FREEZE-DRIED/ COOKED IN THE BAG	PREP METHOD	TOTAL COOKING/ WAITING TIME	WEIGHT BEFORE COOKING/ REHYDRATION	ENERGY PER SERVE	SHELF LIFE	SPECIAL FEATURES	RRP
Back Country Cuisine	Beef Stroganoff	1	Freeze-dried	Pour water in the bag	10 min	90g	1740kJ	2 years		\$9.95
Back Country Cuisine	Roast Chicken	1	Freeze-dried	Pour water in the bag	10 min	90g	1592kJ	2 years		\$9.95
Back Country Cuisine	Three Fruit Cheesecake	2	Freeze-dried	Pour water in the bag	10 min	150g	1945kJ	2 years	Vegetarian	\$11.95
Chefsway	Mushroom Risotto	2	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	15-20 min	185g	1506 kJ	18 months	Vegetarian, gluten free	\$17.95
Chefsway	Spaghetti Bolognese	2	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	15-20 min	185g	1762 kJ	18 months		\$17.95
Happy Camper Gourmet	Cattlemen's Beef Stew	1	Cooked in a bag	Heat bag in a pot of boiling water	6-10 min	300g	1287kJ	18 months		\$10.95
Happy Camper Gourmet	Meatballs in Tomato & Basil Sauce	1	Cooked in a bag	Heat bag in a pot of boiling water	6-10 min	300g	2112kJ	18 months		\$9.95
Outdoor Gourmet	Qo au Vin	2	Freeze-dried	Pour water in the bag	10 min	195g	1790kJ	2 years	Gluten free	\$16.95
Outdoor Gourmet	Tandoori Chicken with Yoghurt Sauce	2	Freeze-dried	Pour water in the bag	10 min	195g	1830kJ	2 years	Gluten free	\$16.95
Settlers Food Products	Beef and Black Bean	3	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	8-10 min	125g	681kJ	Up to 10 years		\$6.90
Settlers Food Products	Mild Thai Curry	3	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	8-10 min	125g	681kJ	Up to 10 years		\$6.90
Strive Food	Creamy Vegetable Pasta	2	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	15 min	230g	2085kJ	12 months	Vegetarian	\$14.50
Strive Food	Vegetable Laksa	2	Dehydrated	Cook on stove top	14 min	230g	1576kJ	12 months	Vegetarian	\$14.50



# Food dehydrators

**Belinda Smith surveys three dehydrating units you can use at home**

If you have a bit of time up your sleeve, or have dietary requirements, taking your own food on a big walk is a tasty – and fun – experience. You'll also be the envy of every other walker you meet. In the weeks approaching the Overland Track earlier this year, I cooked, dehydrated, and packed curry, chilli con carne, and shepherd's pie. When rehydrated, the delicious odours of home-cooked fare attracted some envious glances from other walkers.

When planning the trip, I did a bit of research into the possibility of purchasing a freeze drying machine for home; however, at a few thousand dollars each they were a little pricey for me. A bit of an Internet search threw up a few other freeze drying options. Some suggested using dry ice, but my experiences using it in a lab meant I knew that unless I did it at low pressure, the water wouldn't sublimate properly. I found instructions for a homemade freeze drying machine, but the cost of the pressurised chamber and freezing implements was hefty – and questionable in terms of safety. A more sensible option was to send whatever I wanted freeze dried to a company that owns one – such as a taxidermist – but the thought of having my curry

drying in the same chamber as feathers and fur didn't really do it for me either. Dehydration it was.

Home dehydrators work the same way as commercial ones – food, on trays, dries slowly as warm air circulates and whisks moisture away. Here are a few tips to ensure that the finished product is as tasty as the original meal:

- Spread food evenly across trays, and make sure pieces of meat, vegies and fruit are cut up at the same size. This ensures even dehydration and you won't have burnt bits.
- Dehydrated rice will rehydrate in only a few minutes. I like to have a layer of rice on the tray under a curry so any drips get soaked up and retained by the rice.
- Some people say that dehydrating food diminishes the taste of the reconstituted product, so take some dried garlic, onion and spices with you to add to the meal in the field.

To find out how much water you need to rehydrate a meal, weigh the wet product, then weigh the dehydrated product. The difference in grams is the amount in millilitres of boiling water you'll need – maybe a tiny bit more.

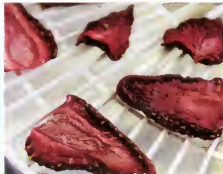
Be inventive with your dehydrator. You can make fabulous snacks and meal additives with it.

- Experiment with drying times and fruit thickness. Some people like chewy pieces, others prefer them crisper; just mind they don't burn. Watermelon dries to become soft, chewy and sweet, with intense flavour. Chewy strawberries and bananas added to porridge make, in my opinion, the best breakfasts for long walks. Citrus fruits, thinly sliced and dried, can be eaten as fruit crisps – peel and all.
- Fruit leathers – where mashed or blended fruit is spread and dried on a solid surface – can sometimes discolour, especially apple leathers. To combat this, add a squeeze of lemon juice to the mix before drying.
- Fat doesn't dry very well and goes rancid in storage so cut as much off as possible before drying meat or making jerky. I like to dry strips of lean beef coated in salt, pepper and chilli flakes.
- Vegetables can lose a little colour but blanching them first can combat this.
- Drying time varies with thickness, altitude, humidity and the water content of the food.

BEFORE



AFTER





**EZI CONCEPTS SNACKMAKER FD5000 \$199.00**

Like its big Ultra brother, the Snackmaker comes with five double walled trays, a mesh sheet, solid sheet and two-year warranty but instead of a manual control knob, it has three fixed settings – a low setting for herbs (35°C), medium for fruit and vegetables (50-55°C) and a high one for meat and meals (60°C). The 500-watt fan will accommodate up to 15 trays but is surprisingly quiet. The unit comes with a recipe and instruction booklet – the same one as the Ultra – which includes (among other things) tips on how to make pot pourri, plum crumble, and fish jerky.

**EZI CONCEPTS ULTRA FD1000 \$369.00**

The largest of the dehydrators, the aptly named Ultra FD1000 has an extra 60 square centimetres per tray compared to the others. This huge size means it can dry heaps of stuff – in fact (according to the booklet), around 15 kilograms of wet produce at a time on up to 30 trays. To push enough air around, it packs a 1000-watt punch. With this high-powered fan, it's slightly noisier than the other dehydrators but if you plan to dehydrate 15 kilograms of food at a time, I feel a quiet unit probably isn't really a priority. You can manually adjust the temperature control, which ranges from 35 to 65°C, and its triple walled insulation design reduces running costs. It comes with a mesh sheet, solid sheet, and two-year warranty.



**FOWLERS VACOLA ULTIMATE DEHYDRATOR 4000 \$180.00**

The Ultimate Dehydrator 4000 comes with four trays, but if you want to add more it has capacity for 12. A comprehensive 64-page recipe and instruction book is included with the unit, as well as a mesh sheet and solid sheet. Not only does the temperature control knob have temperatures in Celsius and Fahrenheit, but also shows the optimal temperatures for different types of produce, from herbs at 35°C to meat at 63°C. The double walled design keeps the warm air in and circulating around the trays and the 550-watt fan really cranks up the airflow. The warranty is good for a year.

BRAND	MODEL NAME/ NUMBER	DRYING AREA PER TRAY (M <sup>2</sup> )	NO OF TRAYS INCLUDED	TEMPERATURE CONTROL	RRP
Ezi Concepts eziconcepts.com.au	Ultra FD1000	0.37	5	Control knob	\$369.00
Ezi Concepts eziconcepts.com.au	Snackmaker FD500	0.31	5	3 fixed settings	\$199.00
Fowlers Vacola fowlersvacola.com.au	Ultimate 4000	0.31	4	Control knob	\$180.00



# Preserve Naturally

**Ezidri**

Preserving fresh fruit and vegetables... naturally.

Drying is one of the oldest methods for preserving food – people have been drying food naturally for thousands of years.

Ezidri allows you to enjoy all of the benefits of natural food drying in the convenience of your home.

Ideal for raw food preparation – digestive enzymes are not destroyed by drying.

Dry food without using chemicals or additives.

**EziVac**

Vacuum packaging made easy!

The EziVac prolongs the freshness of foods for 3 to 5 times as long.

No wasted food.

Simple, safe, money-saving.

EziVac your dehydrated food to last even longer!

Fully automatic operation.



For more information or stockists details  
**Free call 1800 671 109** or visit  
[www.eziconcepts.com.au](http://www.eziconcepts.com.au)





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edge**

**Wild**

**ROCK**

**PRIME  
CREATIVE**  
media

An independent initiative from Prime Creative Media: an Australian company growing individuals, organisations and industries.



### ■ Control your environment

Specifically designed for Australian bushwalkers, the redesigned 3-4 season **Firefly tent** from **Mont** holds 2-3 people, has improved internal volumes and weighs less than its previous incarnation. Ventilation has also been improved with this model: Roof vents have internal zips so you can control your environment easily throughout the night, and you can put the whole thing up and drag it down again quickly using its unique all-in-one pole set. Get a Firefly for \$549.00. [mont.com.au](http://mont.com.au)



### ■ Eating in the wild(o)erness

Designed in Sweden, the **Camp-A-Box** from **Wildo** is a simple, compact, and well-designed crockery set designed for outdoor trips. Weighing only 193 grams, the set contains a plate with lid, two foldout cups, a cutting board, a strainer, a shaker and a spork. The cups, which are two different sizes, provide up to 600 millilitres volume, and the shaker has three compartments – perfect for powdered condiments. Available in different colours, a set costs only \$29.95. [rucsacsupplies.com.au](http://rucsacsupplies.com.au)



### ■ Switch yourself on

Track your position – and your progress – the **Magellan's Switch GPS watch**. Designed for multisports, it can acquire satellites quickly in tough environments, such as in mountainous terrain or under heavy tree cover, and is waterproof to 50 metres. It will also connect to any ANT+ heart rate monitor, foot pod, bike speed/cadence sensor and power meter. The base model retails at \$279.00. [magellangps.com.au](http://magellangps.com.au)



### ■ Part sleeping bag, part Teletubby

A cross between a sleeping bag and a onesie, the **selk'bag Lite** really has to be seen to be believed. Designed in Chile and inspired by the local selk'nam tribe, these sleeping bag suits allow you to roll over in your sleep as much as you want without getting tangled, and have nylon soles so you can walk around in it. Mitten-like hand coverings can be pulled back to allow you to have your hands free if you like, and vents can be opened to stop you getting too hot. With a +5 temperature rating, they're a steal at only \$99.00. [selkbag.com.au](http://selkbag.com.au)



### ■ Cool, comfortable carriage

**Lowe Alpine's AirZone Quest pack** has hit the market, and this one retains all of the great features of the AirZone range. The breathable mesh-back system fits to the contours of your back, making it super comfy, and stretch hip-belt pockets allow you to cram maps/scroggin/bottles away without worrying they'll fall out. Walking pole grippers come standard, as does the front stash pocket. A 27-litre pack will cost you \$159 while a 37-litre is \$169. [intertrek.com.au](http://intertrek.com.au)



### ■ Balance on a knife's edge

When folded, the **Gerber Balance** is like a smooth stone with all-rounded edges and sleek design. This multi-tool boasts 12 components, including scissors, bottle opener, a partially serrated fine-edge blade, pliers and long drivers for work on electronics, if you need a quick repair out in the field. They retail for \$80.00.

Call 03 8645 2400 for stockists.



### ■ Itch-free zone

Woolen shorts. The words evoke images of scratchy inner thighs – or worse. However, merino-specialists **Icebreaker** has just launched their first ever range of shorts, and they're great. The **Escape short** is made from 70 per cent merino and 30 per cent cotton, so they're breathable, and itch- and odour-resistant. They're also lightweight and crease free, so you'll be comfortable and looking good at the same time. Grab a pair for \$129.95.

[au.icebreaker.com](http://au.icebreaker.com)



### ■ Anjan tent, reborn (and renovated)

**Hilleberg's** new **Anjan GT tunnel tent** is a lightweight and roomy new 3-season option for adventurers and wilderness seekers. The Anjan 2 GT and Anjan 3 GT – which sleep two and three people, respectively – boast extended vestibules while retaining impressively low weights. The tunnel covered 'patio' area in the front provides a nice spot to escape a bit of rain as well as store a huge amount of gear. They're not available until early 2013, but when they are, you can get an Anjan 2 GT for \$655.00 and an Anjan 3 GT for \$725.00. [hilleberg.com](http://hilleberg.com)



### ■ Never be thirsty again

Clean water – we need it every day. Many walkers use **Katadyn** Hiker microfilters, but a new version has just been released: The **Hiker Pro**. It doesn't need batteries, can deal with dirty water, and yet only weighs 310 grams. Its cartridge life is now up to 1150 litres and you can fill bottles or bladders at a rate of up to a litre per minute. You can buy one for \$139.95.

[outdooragencies.com.au](http://outdooragencies.com.au)



### ■ Barefoot runnerettes

Girls, hit the trail running with **Merrell's Dash Glove** – now in the new black and parrot colour scheme. Its barefoot style with zero drop cushioning lets your feet land flat on the ground, and the Vibram sole adds bruise protection and traction. The upper is washable and has reflective sections to keep you visible. A pair goes for \$159.95.

[merrell.com/AU](http://merrell.com/AU)



# Walking Books, Field Guides



## ■ Walks, Tracks & Trails of Victoria

BY DERRICK STONE  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2009, RRP \$44.95)

## ■ Walks, Tracks & Trails of New South Wales

BY DERRICK STONE  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$39.95)

These statewide guidebooks each include around 150 walks, tracks or trails that suit anyone from families with young children to solitary wilderness hikers. Not confined to national parks, many of the walks follow gold routes, rail trails and highways, so there really is something for everyone, whether you are a walker, mountain biker, horse rider or motorist. Interested in bushranger lore? Why not follow the windy 420-kilometre journey from the Old Melbourne Gaol through the Strathbogie Ranges to Glenrowan. Want to see wetland species? Try the Wonga Wetlands.

Available as eBooks.



## ■ Day Walks Tasmania

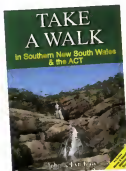
BY JOHN CHAPMAN AND MONICA CHAPMAN  
(2ND ED, OPEN SPACES PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$34.95)

## ■ Day Walks Victoria

BY JOHN CHAPMAN, MONICA CHAPMAN AND JOHN SISEMAN  
(2ND ED, OPEN SPACES PUBLISHING, 2011, RRP \$34.95)

## ■ Day Walks Sydney

BY JOHN CHAPMAN AND MONICA CHAPMAN  
(OPEN SPACES PUBLISHING, 2011, RRP \$34.95)  
Long-time bushwalkers and guide authors, the Chapmans (along with John Siseman for the Victorian issue) have published new three books chock full of day walks. Each volume contains detailed track notes for between 89 and 98 walks in 40 walking areas, along with easy-to-read colour topographic maps, photographs, and gradient profiles. Route changes and new car parks are added to new editions, and further updates for these books (and others by John Chapman) and available at [john.chapman.name](http://john.chapman.name)



## ■ Take a Walk in Southern New South Wales & the ACT

BY JOHN AND LYN DALY  
(TAKE A WALK PUBLICATIONS, 2012, RRP \$34.95)

The eleventh book in the Take a Walk series includes around 2000 kilometres of walk descriptions from Sydney to the Victorian border, complete with maps, gradient profiles and photos (all colour). The walks were selected to cater to a variety of walkers and, like all of their previous books, John and Lyn walked each and every one of the tracks in the book at least once. The book also includes notes for the complete Hume and Hovell Walking Track.

## ■ Plants of the Victorian High Country

BY JOHN MURPHY AND BILL DOWLING  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$29.95)

A handy field guide for amateur botanists and walkers in the High Country, this paperback makes identifying plants a breeze. Scientific botanical jargon is kept to a minimum, making it easy for anyone to learn about plants they might encounter on their travels. Simple keys and photos of leaves, flowers and stems mean that even children can use the book. Plants are sorted into five main groups – herbs, daisy herbs, low woody shrubs, tall shrub and trees, and eucalypts – and a handy glossary explains all terms.

Available as an eBook.



# and Natural History



## ■ Australian Lizards

BY STEVE K WILSON  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$49.95)

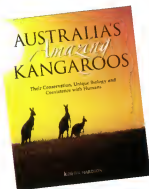
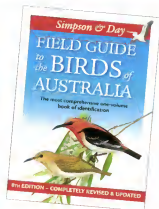
The seventh book about Australian reptiles by (or co-authored by) Steve K Wilson shows his devotion to the subject. With more than 400 colour photographs, which offer glimpses into the often-bizarre lives and behaviours of native lizards, the book provides feeding, mating, and much, much more information on each of the seven families: Dragons, monitors, skinks, flap-footed lizards and three families of geckos.

**Available as an eBook.**

## ■ Field Guide to the Birds of Australia

BY KEN SIMPSON AND NICHOLAS DAY  
(8TH ED, PENGUIN, 2010, RRP \$39.95)

For a more general bird book, try the 8th edition of Simpson and Day's Field Guide. With 132 colour plates and words by experts, it even includes updated maps showing boundaries of breeding and non-breeding populations for every species. Since the 7th edition in 2004, DNA analysis has clarified some nomenclature, all of which is included in this updated version. A whole section at the back is dedicated to bird breeding information, as well as a checklist for beginner twitchers.



## ■ Australia's Amazing Kangaroos

BY KEN RICHARDSON  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$49.95)

This is subtitled 'Their conservation, unique biology and coexistence with humans' so it's no surprise to find information on conservation as well as culling, and their tourism value. However, this does not detract from its identification uses – more than half of the book is dedicated to various species and includes information on their appearance, behaviours, and distribution. The photos are detailed and often quite stunning.

**Available as an eBook.**



## ■ Birds of Prey of Australia

BY STEPHEN DEBUS  
(2ND ED, CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$39.95)

The second edition of this field guide to diurnal raptors incorporates 15 years of new data and a section on difficult species pairs, with split images providing direct contrast. Juveniles, adults, males, females, and colour variations are portrayed as sitting and soaring birds, making it very easy to use for identification. Bird nerds will love it.

**Available as an eBook.**



## ■ A Natural History of Australian Bats

BY GREG RICHARDS AND LES HALL  
(CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2012, RRP \$79.95)

This lovely hardcover book is full of interesting facts about bats, but it's the stunning photography from principal photographer Steve Parish that really makes it special.

Most people only experience bats as flashes of black in the evening sky or chattering noises at night, but in this book you can get up close and personal to some of the most delicate – and arguably ugly – creatures on the planet.

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## OUTBACK SURVIVAL

BY BOB COOPER

(HACHETTE, 2012, RRP \$24.99)

This is a veritable compendium of survival tips if ever caught out in the Aussie outback. Bob Cooper is the man. This book doesn't muck about and is a bone fide manual designed to help you survive. There are a lot of tongue in cheek books that lampoon this theme – including stuff like, 'how to land a jumbo jet,' or, 'how to mix the perfect cocktail'. This isn't one of those trivial dunny fodder style tomes. It's written to be a go to guide for anyone planning on flirting with the harsh isolation of Australia's vast outback. It's a serious appraisal of conditions you'd likely encounter based on what Bob's experienced during

a career that's spanned 25 years. The range of scenarios is impressive: From dealing with sharks while hookah diving, to combatting hypothermia and featureless desert navigation issues, he has experienced and dealt with most things you'd likely encounter.

Bob Cooper is, according to the sub-title emblazoned under his byline on the front cover, 'Australia's leading survival expert'. After reading his book, we're not going to argue.

Aaron Flanagan



## AUSTRALIA – MOUNTAINS

BY ROBERT RANKIN

(RANKIN PUBLISHERS, 2012, RRP \$29.95)

Robert's second Australia-themed book showcases some of his best mountain photography taken over 30 years. Unencumbered by text, each photo takes up a full page or double page spread. A section at the back outlines location and description of each photo, as well as the date it was taken – from Mt Carruthers in June 1984 to Mt Cordeaux in August 2010. Although the vast majority of the photos were taken in the 1980s and early 1990s, it's interesting to see these photos and compare them to present-day landscapes. Those too young to remember or with

not-so-sharp memories who often walk through the areas captured in this book might be keen to see how they looked decades ago.

Robert first chronicled the wild areas of Australia when he studied physics at university. This initial spark inspired him to travel to our remote regions and present them in photo form.

Budding landscape photographers (or just those interested) will enjoy the photographic notes supplied by Robert, along with some tips on shooting mountains and how to fine-tune variables to best convey the sheer size of a peak.

Belinda Smith



## A NIGHT ON A MOUNTAIN

BY BARRIE RIDGWAY

(BLURB.COM, 2012, RRP \$50.94)

If you're after something a little more region-specific, Barrie's photographic essay chronicles one night spent on a mountain the Namadgi National Park – from bright azure skies of midday to the soft pinkish hues of the evening, through to the sparkling orange tones of early morning sun.

Namadgi, which lies to the west of Canberra and covers 106 095 hectares – 46 per cent of the ACT – contains huge variation in geology and ecology. Lowland forests, sub-alpine forests, and alpine zones all add rich contrast to the photos.

The area was declared a national park in 1984 – one of the most northern parks of the Australian

Alps national parks – and has a long history of human inhabitants. Nowadays, most human interaction with the park is through the many activities available, from walking to recreational driving. Barrie says that the book is, 'my portrayal of the need to preserve wilderness in its own right for the survival of all life on this planet Earth.' He takes this seriously, as each photo shares a special moment for him on his overnight trip.

Accompanied by plant identification, a picture of a cheeky possum, and Barrie's thoughts and musings throughout, the book is a nice gift for someone with a connection to the area. They're printed on demand so be sure to order early.

Belinda Smith



## DIARY 2013

BY THE AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

(ACF, 2012, RRP \$21.95)

Now you've got yourself inspired and sorted out for a big summer of exploration, all you need are time management skills to make sure nothing overlaps. The Australian Conservation Foundation's spiral-bound diary is back after a year off, and is full of inspirational images to get you on your way. Photos range from the deep blue underwater kelp forests off the coast of Tasmania to the sinewy trunks of buttressed figs in Queensland, and are printed using soy-based inks on paper that is 100 per cent post-consumer recycled pulp.

Often, recycled paper products can turn out a little dull or off-white, but this glossy diary with its high-resolution photographs – the detail of the bird-beak Hakea is gorgeous – is anything but.

Keeping with the green theme, the paper is Certified Carbon Neutral, Process Chlorine Free, and the whole diary production process is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

The diary is distributed by long-time photographer Rob Blakers and makes a great gift for friends or family here or overseas. Each diary purchase supports the ACF's work to achieve a healthy environment for all Australians.

Belinda Smith



# Peter Cochrane

My first memory of the bush is my parents taking me to the You Yangs, I must have been six or seven years old, and I can still smell the eucalyptus that hit me when we first got out of the car. It has remained with me all my life and always, even now, has been the absolutely essential Australian experience and it drew me outside to the bush.

I bushwalked when I was at school and went to university to study geology at ANU, because I thought that would give me an outdoor occupation. I discovered it didn't, so I turned more to forestry and plant ecology. By just good fortune, I got a summer job as a lab assistant part way through my degree, doing some glasshouse and outside fieldwork around Canberra. That grew into a 15-year career working primarily in national parks – mostly in and around Canberra but also across Australia – doing physiological ecology and plant ecology. I had a fabulous time doing that.

I would go out for days on end. I did a series of projects in the Snowy Mountains looking at recovery after wildfires and physiological factors affecting tree line; exploring why the tree line was where it was, could it be higher, that kind of thing. We did an awful lot of work monitoring a large number of plants over many years in all weathers. I did three winters' work in the Snowies looking at factors causing tree death in winter, and that got me into cross country skiing. I disliked skiing for a long time because I thought it was a bit pretentious and expensive but I've grown to love it. It's a great way of enjoying the environment. There's something about being up high in the absolute quiet. There's a strong interaction with nature.

I was extraordinarily lucky falling into a wonderful job working with really exciting people who were internationally renowned for the work they were doing. It got me really engaged in ecology. I became a technical officer and grew into a more managerial role, but always still had an outdoor component that I could undertake. In the early 1990s, under the strong influence of my direct supervisor who was science advisor to the Hawke government at the time, and because I was always interested in politics, I eventually worked in Parliament House.

I initially worked as advisor for sustainable development to then-Primary Industries Minister John Kerin, and I ended up covering virtually all environmental aspects of the Primary Industries portfolio. Land care was a big feature, as were water resources and the greenhouse effect, even uranium and nuclear energy. I got to span a lot of issues, all from the environment side. I then worked for Simon Crean and later I was offered a job working in the oil and gas industry for the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association.

A big chunk of what I did was working on environmental issues for them, such as research projects on the environmental impacts of the industry – greenhouse in particular – and things like the environmental assessment and approvals process.

I did that for five years and it was really interesting. I loved that job too. I learned a lot about the oil and gas industry and during that time, came to the attention of Robert Hill who was Minister for the Environment at the time. He suggested I might be interested in applying for the role of Director of National Parks and not terribly long after that, I was appointed. I've been in this job nearly 13 years – nearly as long as my career with ANU.

I've maintained a constant thread of working in the environment, but from different perspectives – research, government, political, the industry side and now, managing an agency that has a primary responsibility for conservation.



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